



REBIRTH: HOW A LOSER BECAME A PRINCE CHARMING

BOOK 09

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**Rebirth: How A Loser Became A Prince
Charming**

(重生之抠脚大汉变男神)

by

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Synopsis

Qin Guan was reborn and sent back to his final semester in High School 18 years ago.

Getting a second chance at life, he works hard to turn things around and eventually become a Prince Charming.

What will his life be like the second time around? What will he have to go through?

How will he succeed in turning from a loser into a Prince Charming?

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Chapter 801: A Dedicated Guy

Du Chun had shocked Qin Guan. The two of them had not even been introduced formally ever since they had joined the crew. Before Qin Guan could say anything, Director Hu Mei shouted at them.

"Attention, everyone! The next scene is about to begin! What are you doing, Du Chun? Qin Guan? Get into position!"

"Yes, madame!"

The two of them rushed to the garden and assumed their positions. Hu Mei walked towards them from behind the camera.

"Hey, Du Chun. Your eyebrows look weird. Qin Guan's are rising like swords, but yours are hanging down! Stylist! Where is the stylist? Did you confuse their makeup? Young Emperor Han Wu has to look handsome."

The stylist felt like crying, but did not. Du was born with drooping eyebrows. Shall I erase them and draw over them? Besides, it's impossible to make him look handsome while Qin Guan is standing next to him!

After talking with the stylist in low voices, Hu returned to the camera in confusion. Is it okay for Tian Fen to be more handsome than the emperor?

She had no choice but to try. "Camera!"

The two men began performing.

Du Chun was both annoying and eager. He tried his best to compete with Qin Guan, but it was in vain. Although Qin Guan was wearing a plain costume and standing behind him, no one could ignore his presence.

Du Chun was wearing his splendid imperial robe, while Qin Guan's robe was dark green. He looked like a steady middle-aged

official in it.

He could read the young emperor's face, so he knew what his nephew was thinking about. He was both a really clever official and a relative of the emperor.

Qin Guan's flexible performance made Du Chun seem like a greenhand in comparison. He was still a young actor though. If it wasn't for Qin Guan, everyone would have thought highly of his steady line delivery and professional acting.

Now everyone just felt disappointed though. Even Hu Mei didn't stop for his sake. She knew that Du Chun would not be able to improve in such a short while, so an immature, annoyed portrayal of the emperor was acceptable. Everyone was inclined to be tolerant with young actors. Every actor had to go through that period after all.

As the long scene was finished smoothly, Du Chun felt as if he was in a dream. I have potential! The director thinks highly of me! I'm not inferior to Qin Guan!

He chuckled to himself for a few seconds before Qin Guan turned to him again. "What were we talking about earlier? Oh, right. About romantic confidence."

Qin Guan wrapped his arm around Du Chun's shoulders and pulled him away.

"You don't know much about the situation. My mind has always been on her. It was only a matter of time. I don't want to keep it a secret from the public. I just want to tell everyone and weed out my real fans. The people that only care about my marriage are not real fans. They are just idiots, to be honest."

Okay, that sounds reasonable. Could you please let me go now? Du Chun realized he had been pulled away from the set. Help! This actor is trying to kill me!

Du Chun had finally seen Qin Guan's true colors. He couldn't

handle a passionate guy like him. I wouldn't have talked to him if I knew. Fortunately, my scenes will be finished soon. Then I can just hand over my part to Brother Chen Baoguo. He looks like he's a tougher man.

Chen Baoguo had joined the crew three days earlier and watched all the important scenes of the other actors with great interest. He had also read the script plenty of times and studied all the relative material.

Even Qin Guan, who was a very hard-working guy, felt inferior compared to Chen.

By then, the hardest time of the summer had come around. The whole crew was wearing shorts and tank tops and had sweat streaming down their backs. If one poured water on the ground, it would turn into a white mist before evaporating. Summer in Zhejiang was terrible.

Unfortunately, the actors had to wear Han Dynasty costumes, which included long robes, layers of clothes and tall crowns. Thousands of years ago, the temperature used to be cooler, so people hadn't suffered from heatwaves.

Qin Guan had only two scenes left. Tian Fen was about to reach the end of his life. He was lamentable. He was funny. He had been both humble and glorious.

Chapter 802: Yin and Yang

Qin Guan's long job would finally come to an end. After a short stay in the capital, he would fly to Taiwan for another job. Only now did Qin Guan learn about the difficulties of filming a TV show and what shooting for a long time was like.

He decided to be careful when agreeing to such TV shows in the future. Not having enough spare time didn't match his concept of satisfying work.

As he thought about this, he shook his head miserably and took another bite of iced watermelon.

Crack! It was so crisp and sweet...

"This is so good, Wang!"

"I know! The seller did not even count the change."

She and Qin Guan were very much alike. A watermelon cost very little, but Wang had still asked for a discount.

The director got angry at the large group surrounding Qin Guan. They had been having so much fun that they had forgotten to save a piece of watermelon for her.

"What are you guys doing? Why are you eating watermelon? Get ready for the next scene!"

Instead of stopping, Qin Guan sped up.

"You! Qin Guan! Don't look at the others! Put the watermelon down. Where is the stylist? Who will help him change into his costume?"

Qin Guan looked down at his open robe and sweaty chest. There was still a seed on his face.

Damn! I have to fasten all the buttons again. I hate this f*cking sticky weather! Qin Guan murmured as he wiped his mouth and returned to the set.

"The art of coitus, the second to last scene."

Chen Baoguo and Qin Guan entered the sleeping chamber of the Qin Palace. For the sake of politics, Tian Fei was trying to persuade Emperor Han Wu to be intimate with Chen Ajiao.

The cameras followed them as they walked.

"Your Majesty, as your uncle, I would like to remind Your Majesty to cherish and trust the empress. Be gentle with her."

He smiled meaningfully at the emperor. The middle-aged man still looked like a nobody. There was a wretched expression on his face as he stressed the word "gentle".

Chen Baoguo had a faint smile on his face. He sat by the handrails of the passage, his red robe and black cloak making him look dashing. Although he was not a handsome young man, he was one of the best actors in China.

The two of them had a tacit understanding.

Suddenly, Chen asked, "What do you mean by 'gentle', uncle?"

His raised voice sounded frivolous. He had experience with a lot of women and girls. He was good at conquering, not being a gentleman.

Taken aback, Qin Guan fixed his eyes on Chen's serious face for a few seconds. Then he licked his lips and swallowed.

He held up his fist towards Chen and spread his fingers, squeezing the words out of his throat with profound weight.

"Your Majesty should learn about the advantages of harm and benefit, as well as silence and action."

"What?"

Qin Guan whispered to his nephew. He was not shameless enough to speak loudly.

Chen shot a suspicious look at a certain part of his uncle's body

and then shook his head. I have made this very clear! Don't you understand?

Feeling helpless, Qin Guan took out a painting roll and spread it before Chen as if it was a priceless treasure.

It was a French postcard from his collection.

Chen grabbed it out of his hand and pulled him away. He wanted to desert his benefactor as soon as his help was required. The anger in Qin Guan's eyes could kill his own nephew.

Chen looked at the painting in amusement. He even pointed to one of the figures. "This guy looks like you, uncle."

"Impossible!" Qin Guan hastened to deny it.

"Ha ha ha!"

"Cut!"

Director Hu was the first to burst into laughter. The onlookers did the same. Qin Guan immediately pulled his robe open. The lining was soaked with sweat once again.

Chen Baoguo was also suffering from the heat. He was portraying a guy from Northern China, so his costume was even thicker than Qin Guan's.

Annoyed to see Qin Guan take off his clothes at a professional speed, he spoke with the same meaningful tone he had during the scene, "I'll study that skill with you later at night, uncle. Is that okay with you?"

Chapter 803: An Independent Brand

When Wang Liying hastened to pull Qin Guan away, she saw that the strict actor had suffered a sunstroke.

Unfortunately, Chen didn't get a chance to talk to Qin Guan that night. The TV show was scheduled to air on CCTV before the next Spring Festival, so the director had to rush to make the deadline. Every day, Qin Guan got up, rushed to the set and worked until nightfall. He was really glad when his part was over.

Tempted by a beautiful woman, his character got involved in the assassination of the emperor. The timid man finally revealed his true colors and his fear of being a madman. The confused emperor paid a personal visit to his home.

Qin Guan was wearing a blue robe. His messy gray hair was hanging down loosely on his shoulders as he stood on the roof holding a kite and murmuring to himself, "Fly, Zhir! Fly with the kite! Beat the Huns!"

Even though he was reaching the end of his life, he could still read the emperor's mind. During his last sane moments, he gave his vast wealth to the emperor to aid him in the battle in Northern China. The truth about his insanity was not important to Emperor Han Wu. The old, scared man was no longer an obstacle on his way.

From then on, he managed to unite his court. His great plan was now in motion.

Everyone sighed in sympathy for the man on the roof. They felt sad to see a child grow up.

He was a complicated man, but he was neither good nor bad.

Qin Guan was a versatile actor. After more than two years, he would finally leave the crew.

Life was like a TV drama. People hurried to and fro. Some came

and some left. Some actors were there for the entire show, while others only had a short part. The protagonist of the show could have been only a minor character in another drama. That was the most fantastic thing about TV.

The crew was really busy preparing for their trip to the Mongolian grassland, so they had no time to pay attention to the departing actor. Qin Guan left the crew alone in disappointment. Then he smiled at the cold dessert Wang Liying handed him.

It was Chilled Mango Sago Cream with Pomelo in a small plastic box, an authentic Hong Kong dessert that was very rare at the time. Thanks to the people gathering in Hengdian from all directions, the film base had become an international snack exhibition.

That particular dessert had a standard recipe, so it tasted practically the same, no matter where one bought it. The only difference lay in the amount of fruit inside it.

For Qin Guan, some mango and grapefruit were enough. The sago was cooked well, so one could just swallow the round, smooth grains without chewing them. The thick coconut milk, regular milk and sugar made the sauce perfect.

Before freezing it, one had to add the smashed grapefruit and mango. After half an hour, one could take it out and have a taste. That dessert was the best cold refreshment for a summer day, as it was suitable for people of all ages.

The wonderful snack granted Qin Guan a lot of energy, so he managed to get home in one piece despite the scorching summer heat.

When he got there, he found a warm message at the door. He opened the fridge and saw that it was filled with food Cong Nianwei had cooked. Qin Guan immediately felt refreshed. She hadn't forgotten about him, even though she was really busy.

Only people who did not miss someone forgot about them and used the pressure they were under as an excuse. Qin Guan was really satisfied. After kissing his girlfriend goodbye, he went to the firm to take care of some work before he travelled to Taiwan.

He had finally picked a name for his brand. He had originally wanted to call it "Qin & Cong", but his team had rejected that idea unanimously. Instead, they gave it the catchy name "LESS/MORE".

They were actually planning on turning it into a foreign brand, or just creating a so-called foreign brand, as Chinese people always liked to pursue international success. This way, a good sales volume would be a given.

Qin Guan voted down that proposal in good faith.

Those days, people could get more information than ever before. Everyone was familiar with brands, both domestic and overseas ones, so internet users could reveal a brand's past to the public. That was why Qin Guan would rather create an original brand.

In the end, they decided to call it "LESS/MORE".

Chapter 804: Extensive Promotion

The concept of "less is more" was adopted by many designers. At the beginning, it had been just about promoting simplicity over extravagance, but people had gradually given it a more profound interpretation.

The name combined two different meanings. One could find both modern patterns with simple, smooth lines and complicated vintage clothing at their store. Their brand offered everything one would expect.

QC had found a large building in Wangfujing that they could use as a private design studio. The small studio inspired the ambition of Qin Guan's design team, whose work was printed on posters in the building. The feedback of the market was essentially the sales volume.

Thanks to Qin Guan's influence in the fashion circle, their brand had its own agents in dozens of cities even before opening for business.

On a September day in 2005, their clothes were placed on the counters of different malls in different cities.

The grand opening ceremonies were magnificent. Their agents had collaborated with the local media to organize big events. Some rich agents had even rented all the mall business exhibition halls to hang Qin Guan's posters. From then on, Qin Guan started occupying all levels of the fashion market.

The grand events shocked other brands, such as Baoxiniao, Seven Wolves, Shanshan and so on, who had no idea what the new brand would be like.

What will this mysterious brand be like? What about their prices? Do they have any special promoting skills? Who will be their potential customers?

All this information had been kept secret until 10:00 a.m. that day. Qin Guan cut the ribbon of the shop in Wangfujing, and then all the chain stores opened one after the other. The audience could watch the opening ceremonies of other cities on a large screen by the entrance.

The flagship store took up a full 800 square meters in Wangfujing. This was considered luxurious in that area, as an inch of land there was worth an ounce of gold.

Qin Guan had invited all his friends from the fashion and entertainment circle to the ceremony, which was a lot like a press conference of a top brand. The LESS/MORE logos printed on the background were all striking, and his friends shocked the media even more.

Qin Guan had used public office for private benefit. He had gotten his renowned models to attend the ceremony wearing clothes made by his own brand. Although the reporters couldn't recognize them all, the clothes were still sparkling before their eyes.

Huayi had also sent Li Bingbing and Fan Pingping. The two flowers were the best actresses of the company. Du Chun, Xu Zheng and Wang Baoqiang stood behind them. Their status in the entertainment circle was less significant.

The event was too grand for an opening ceremony, but it seemed that the award-winning actor had good social connections.

The decorated baskets were arranged in order by the entrance. The names on the baskets attracted the attention of the reporters.

Sixth-Generation Directors: Zhang Yang, Ning Hao, Lu Chuan

Famous Directors: Zhang Yimou, Feng Xiaogang, Zhang Jizhong, Yin Li, Hu Mei...

Actors: Zhang Xueyou, Wu Junru, Zeng Zhiwei, Zhou Yun, Jiao Huang, Chen Baoguo...

Wang Liying was a good girl. Before leaving the crew, she had sent invitations to all the actors. She didn't actually expect them to attend, but a basket was enough for her.

Huayi and "If, Love" would collaborate with Qin Guan again, and all sixth-generation directors were longing for his presence.

Starlets from all sides started gathering around the site. An appearance before the cameras was all they were after.

Chapter 805: No Label

The chaos outside didn't affect the ceremony. The PR agency was good at crowd control.

Qin Guan was wearing a formal suit from the latest Armani Haute Couture fall collection. The suit was gray-blue, and the tie was trimmed properly. He looked like a businessman in that outfit.

This was the first time people would discover his identity as a businessman. Everyone held their breath as they tried to estimate his fortune.

His modelling and acting income aside, his earnings from his firms alone had awarded him a spot in the business circle.

Besides, Qin Guan was not a graduate of a normal art school, but an elite school, both domestically and internationally. The schoolmates standing behind him reminded people of the subtle differences between him and other guys working in the entertainment circle.

Qin Guan had friends in politics, business and trade. They were all young and active, with a bright future ahead of them.

They could be the award-winning actor's solid foundation. Qin Guan was a typical man after all.

Miss Etiquette suddenly walked up to him with a tray covered in red velvet. The golden scissors seemed to have been made especially for the ceremony as they shone under the lights.

The peony-like satin matched them perfectly, but everything looked inferior compared to Qin Guan's slender hands. His nails were trimmed and he was sparkling like a star. Qin Guan picked up the scissors and cut the ribbon. The red satin fell apart like a flower. Then Qin Guan put the elegant scissors back on the tray.

His action signalled the start of all the ceremonies. On the screen, the ribbons were cut one after the other. Qin Guan pulled the

curtain down to reveal the large logo to the audience.

The store was nothing out of the ordinary. A winding passage led inside, where each small cabinet was open to the public. There were two small plastic mannequins in the display, but everything else was on hangers.

The designing style of different designers was easy to tell apart.

The cabinet at the entrance was marketed towards white-collar workers. The prices ranged from 200 to 1,000 yuan, which was acceptable for the average customer.

If one took a turn, the prices increased. There were formal dresses for parties on display.

If one walked inside further, they would find clothing catalogues. Fashion insiders would realize right away that this was a customization studio.

Nowadays, people wanted to dress uniquely. Ready-made clothes bought from stores made it too easy for one to accidentally wear the same outfit as somebody else. One saw too many people dressed the same on the streets.

Qin Guan's store met everyone's demands. A little money could improve one's style and allow them to avoid the embarrassment of wearing the same clothes with another person.

The costumers reacted differently when they realized this. The starlets were really glad, as their agencies did not pay for their clothes. They had to buy their own formal outfits for award ceremonies, press conferences and street photo-shoots.

Plus, they could only wear each outfit once before the cameras. They had lost so many chances to make an appearance in public.

Qin Guan's store was so considerate, it felt almost like a gospel from Heaven. They could pay a small amount to change each outfit into something else. This would save them a lot of money!

Besides, those clothes were tailored by famous designers. Some of them had even won national contests, so usually only superstars qualified for their services.

Thanks to Qin Guan, they wouldn't need to worry about what to wear anymore in the future.

Meanwhile, spies from other companies found it difficult to label the brand. The brand's formal wear was finer and more elegant than others, but it could not be considered high-end due to its reasonable prices.

Although the prices of the formal outfits were not that low, they would be a second-to-none choice for the average person that wanted to buy formal clothes.

Chapter 806: Hello, Taiwan

People didn't need to worry about the prices of the mysterious clothes. The younger customers took a few more steps inside. The delightful clothing was a feast for the eyes.

It was natural for people to pursue beauty. Everyone always had an occasion to wear formal clothes to, so Qin Guan's brand would become their first choice.

Plus, young people were a big influence. Perhaps when they succeeded in their careers, LESS/MORE would become their obsession. The owner of the brand was really cunning. He had pulled off the perfect transition from a white-collar worker look to a rich businessman look.

There was also a secret door at the customization area, whose purpose only fashion insiders were aware of. It had to be a secret elevator to the underground parking garage, which was reserved for VIPs that wanted to avoid the public eye.

Qin Guan was an extraordinary man.

Suddenly, everyone relaxed. Qin Guan's concept couldn't be imitated by others. No one could integrate the whole fashion circle into a single brand.

Each store hired only one major designer. No company had the financial resources to employ so many designers, but it was a piece of cake for Qin Guan. The orders could be sent directly to his studio, or one of his team's designers could arrange a short meeting.

Only Qin Guan could achieve something like this.

Everyone exchanged meaningful glances and let out long sighs of relief. Suddenly, something happened.

Ye Dong had brought together his old schoolmates to attend the ceremony. The young men, most of whom were working at large

enterprises and public institutions, had been attracted by the clothing samples.

Meanwhile, a young lady was trying on a tailored suit and complaining to her friends, "I work in a bank, so I have to wear suits every day. I cannot wear other clothes, like girls who work at private enterprises. Senior Qin is so good at designing. If our uniform was like this, I would love wearing it!"

Both students and people of all ages disliked boring uniforms.

A second girl raised her eyebrows and answered, "That's easy. Just give the directors some feedback."

"Logistical personnel must fight back! I believe in Qin Guan. He is the best. Those inferior clothing factories only get orders because of their connections and the bribes they give."

She had a valid point. Everyone nodded in agreement.

The spies were beating their chests in frustration. It was really hard to get a large order for uniforms. Qin Guan had scored a lucky goal.

The lively ceremony ended with Qin Guan's departure. The store was on the right track, but its owner had helped it along. Qin Guan hadn't counted on his personality, unlike other brands created by stars. He had only concentrated on the designs.

His smart concept and the large audience had led to the store's success.

Finally free, Qin Guan stretched his body on his bed at home. He could at last catch a breath.

He lit some colorful aromatic candles and felt the relaxing smell of the essential oil linger around the bed.

He and Cong Nianwei were planning on moving away from their small home with the sweet memories, but an open living environment wouldn't go well with Qin Guan's fame. He had to

sneak back home every day. Their house couldn't withstand the attacks of the paparazzi.

He would only be spending a few more nights in that room.

The shoes that fit one's feet didn't have to be expensive. Qin Guan preferred to have the right fit. His social status had changed a lot, but he couldn't do anything he wanted without getting into trouble.

Doing the right thing at the right time showed one's experience and maturity. As he thought about this, Qin Guan turned to take the sleeping Cong Nianwei in his arms and blew out the candles one by one.

Goodnight.

Qin Guan would be taking a trip to Taiwan. The Golden Horse Film Festival Awards, which had been founded in 1930, had a great influence in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

They had experienced both the golden time and the decline of the film industry in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Chapter 807: The Golden Horse Night Market

The local film industry had gone through many ups and downs. It had experienced both wars and politics, and during the late 1980s, it had observed from the sidelines the rise and fall of the mainland's film industry.

As the Chinese film industry bloomed, more and more films participated in the exclusive film festival. *Ke Ke Xi Li*, which was a mainland film, had reached the final round thanks to its unique humanistic nature and realistic shooting technique.

Among the familiar Hong Kong actors, people saw a popular Asian star called Qin Guan. As the protagonist of "*Ke Ke Xi Li*", he was one of the nominees for the Best Actor Award.

All the other nominees were more famous than him in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The nominees were Liang Chaowei from "*2046*", Liu Dehua from "*Infernal Affairs III*", and Zhang Xueyou from "*Golden Chicken*".

They were all representatives of the best actors in Hong Kong, compared to whom Qin Guan seemed weak.

When Qin Guan reached Taipei, he didn't feel uncomfortable. It looked like a regular city in South China. He just felt annoyed with the standard Mandarin of the Taiwanese.

Qin Guan had good friends in Taiwan, so two beautiful women welcomed him at the airport. Xu Ruoxuan and Lin Zhiling attracted a lot of attention.

The keen Taiwanese paparazzi had been waiting at the airport for them. Fortunately, Wang was a very capable girl. The two ladies showed up at the exit at the same time, so that the newspapers the next day wouldn't accuse Qin Guan of having a secret girlfriend in Taiwan.

This would be the opposite of Qin Guan's aim, which was to just attend the festival as quietly as possible.

Unfortunately, the reporters stuck around Qin Guan like flies around honey. Flashing lights twinkled everywhere as some brave guys shouted at him.

"Are you confident about winning the award?"

"Liu Dehua almost won the award last year. He seems really confident this time. What do you think of him?"

"Will the Golden Horse Festival be the end of your success?"

Everyone glowered at the idiot.

No judge would dare cause Qin Guan's failure in Taiwan. That would not be a smart idea. After more than 40 years, the film industry on the island was fading. The Golden Horse Festival only kept going so it could save its dignity.

If it weren't for the superstars, no one would be paying attention to a festival on such a tiny island. In an effort to flatter the mainlanders, the organizers had even replaced Zheng Yuling, the exclusive female distinguished guest, with Lin Zhiling, because of her recent success on the Chinese mainland.

They were certainly not brave enough to cause the award-winning actor's failure.

Taking advantage of this, Qin Guan escaped with the two ladies. The reporters regretted their words when they came back to their senses. They had missed the chance to get any useful information from him.

As soon as he reached his hotel, Qin Guan got lost in the delicious food of Taipei. The city was famous for its night markets. Only in its noisy, bustling markets did the stars get the chance to relax and focus on the food.

Foodies loved traditional night markets, as authentic tastes could

only be found there. There was a variety of food available, including sticky tofu, fried squid tentacles and frog eggs. The most famous specialty there though was oyster omelette.

Just as its name implied, the omelette was made of fried oysters and eggs. Most people from the Chinese mainland couldn't tolerate its strange taste, as it was hard for the cook to clean all the oysters properly. Plus, oysters were not suitable for old people.

This was actually Qin Guan's favorite.

He followed the two ladies' suggestion and led his team to the busiest night market in Taipei. The oysters there came from Lok-kang and they were caught the same day at the harbor and transported to Taipei.

The fresh oysters looked large, tasty and juicy, so one portion per person would be enough. The owner of the stand was busy frying the oysters. A large pan of ingredients could satisfy 10 people, but he had to work consistently in order to feed his customers.

Qin Guan was waiting in line in leisure. Even waiting for such a snack was fun.

When the fresh oysters were half-cooked, the man poured egg whites, sweet potato powder, seafood juice and other spices to create a pancake. After a short while, the mixture turned golden yellow.

He divided the large pancake into smaller portions and put them on dishes. When he added a little hot sauce, they became authentic Taiwanese style oyster and eggs. The dish was soft and tasted like seafood. It tasted like the lifestyle and romanticism of the people in the city.

The history of that snack was filled with heroism.

Chapter 808: On The Red Carpet

It had actually been provisioned for Zheng Chenggong's troops while he had been fighting the Dutch army. At the time, oysters and sweet potatoes could be found everywhere in Taiwan. The snack ended up saving the army and helping Zheng win the final victory against the colonists.

Actually, most of Chinese history involved food.

Qin Guan was in a good mood when he arrived at the award ceremony. Taking into consideration the feedback of the entertainment circle and the long-term aesthetic fatigue of the masses, the organizing committee had tried bringing attention to the event through another method.

They had chosen a memorable place as a venue and promoted vigorously the attending stars.

After a serious selecting process, they had decided on the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall, a monument built on the 100th anniversary of Mr. Sun. It was a monument of great importance for the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

That night, the towering building with the carved beams and painted rafters welcomed a big number of superstars in splendid outfits and makeup. They would be the protagonists of the night.

The red carpet started at the main entrance of the hall and stretched till the path to the garden. It was surrounded by countless reporters, who had gone there for the exquisite ceremony.

Lu Chuan arrived early and cleaned his golden-framed glasses again, afraid that he would look inferior next to Qin Guan as they walked together.

People called Qin Guan the Group Photo Killer. Everyone felt nervous when they were about to be in the same photo with him,

but Lu Chuan had to walk with the handsome guy, as "Ke Ke Xi Li" was the only finalist from the Chinese mainland that would compete for the most important awards.

As a result, Lu Chuan had to share the spotlight with Qin Guan. There were many other famous attendants around them. Some of them, such as Zhang Xueyou and Wu Yusen, had gone there for Qin Guan.

People had originally thought that the ceremony would be a competition between Liu Dehua and Liang Chaowei, but Qin Guan's presence had complicated things. Zhang Xueyou, who was a guy that loved to gossip, had travelled to Taiwan. In his opinion, a confrontation between three actors would be more interesting than one between two.

When a group of Hong Kong stars had received invitations, the undervalued ceremony had suddenly become more popular. The organizing committee felt like bursting into laughter from joy.

The media acted without delay. The reporters from Japan and the Republic of Korea, who had lost any interest in the festival in the past, had also showed up.

As a result, the stars were under the illusion that the Taiwanese film industry was still in its prime, when it had reigned over the Chinese industry.

Their dream was interrupted when they saw Lu Chuan and Qin Guan set their feet on the red carpet hand in hand. All the reporters pointed their cameras at Qin Guan in unison. The scene back at the Berlin Film Festival was recreated in Taipei.

"Qin Guan!"

"Look here, Qin Guan!"

"Are you confident about winning the award?"

"Slow down, Qin Guan!"

They all followed Qin Guan as he moved forward, making the people behind him feel awkward. No reporter seemed to have noticed them.

Lin Jiaxin and Wu Yanzu exchanged a glance with a grimace. They had no choice but to keep walking along the carpet.

Even Wu could be mentioned in the same breath as Qin Guan in that moment. None of his peers could stand next to the actor as equals. In everyone's minds, Qin Guan belonged to the previous generation of actors. The youngest members of the film circle were considered juniors compared to him, even though Qin Guan hadn't even turned 24 yet.

Qin Guan waved at the audience at the end of the carpet. Suddenly, he saw the two men behind them, who wanted to share some of the attention of the media.

Qin Guan slowed down. He wanted to have a word with one of the young men. In his past life, he had been one of the most popular and handsome men in China. Qin Guan used to dream of looking like him.

He walked up to the Hong Kong actor, looking elegant and charming. He seemed confident and proud.

Wu and Lin panicked. All the reporters and stars had fixed their eyes on them, waiting for the award-winning actor to show his purpose. They had actually never spoken with him before.

Chapter 809: A Show With Four Famous Actors

"Are you Wu Yanzu?"

"Yes, I am."

"Can I shake your hand?"

"Huh? Oh, okay."

"You are so handsome. Cheers!"

Wu took his hand back and chuckled to himself. He had misinterpreted Qin Guan's last words. He likes my acting. He must consider me a rival.

Actually, Qin Guan had just made a joke. He was really happy that he had outshined the famous man.

Thanks to his praise, everyone concentrated on Wu.

"Qin Guan is right. Take a good look at him. Wu is a really handsome guy."

"Senior Qin didn't lie."

"I think he is just an ordinary actor. I'm just as good as he is."

When Wu returned to Hong Kong after the ceremony, he saw his job offers increase thanks to the power of Qin Guan's words.

Meanwhile, he was among the group of nominees competing for the Best Supporting Actor Award. Zhang Xueyou, Liu Dehua, Qin Guan and Liang Chaowei were sitting in the middle of the third row.

They had all been old rivals for many years, with the exception of Qin Guan. The four actors attracted almost all the cameras, so the audience at home could see their every move.

The hostess was Lin Zhiling, who was a sweet, gentle lady. The

host, whose name was Cai Kangyong, couldn't avoid the cameras, even if he dressed like a moving bulb. Everyone fixed their eyes on the sparkling hosts.

Zhang Xueyou suddenly approached Qin Guan.

"Qin Guan?"

"Yes? Brother Zhang?"

"Why have you been staying in the mainland lately? You should accept some work with Hong Kong directors."

"I was ordered to do so by the SARFT. They want me to contribute to mainstream films."

"Wow! That's so disappointing! There are no good scripts these days..."

Why did you ask me to find a script in Hong Kong then?

Zhang Xueyou's nonsense inspired the men sitting on either side of Qin Guan. Liu Dehua felt that he had to join the conversation, so he tried to find a new topic.

"Qin Guan?"

"Yes?"

"It's already been two years since we cooperated. How fast time flies!"

"Yes."

"If you find a good script, don't hesitate to call me."

"I will." Liu had signed a contract with Huayi after all. He was in Qin Guan's camp in a sense.

As Liu succeeded in joining the conversation, the cameras turned to Liang Chaowei. The photographers wanted to watch the world burn, so they zoomed in on Liang to capture the expression on his face clearly.

Hong Kong was a tiny area, so the competition for resources,

connections, scripts and producers was much fiercer than that on the vast mainland.

Liu Dehua and Liang Chaowei had a similar value, influence and box office appeal. It was impossible for them to call a truce, although the media was pretending that everything was going well between them.

They had cooperated on the movie franchise "Infernal Affairs" three times, and the first two movies had made the final round of the Golden Horse Festival the two previous years. Liu and Liang were both the protagonists of the franchise, but Liu had lost to Liang twice!

This year, Liu had come to the festival with the third movie of the franchise. If he was defeated by Liang again, his fame and dignity would take a big hit.

Just the thought made Liu be polite to Qin Guan. He would be happy if Qin Guan won the award. He just hoped that the other actor lost.

Everyone was looking at them with relish. Qin Guan glanced at Liang guiltily. Do you feel isolated? I'm innocent, Mr. Liang.

The two men communicated with their eyes. The host's excited voice suddenly brought them back to reality.

"The nominees for the Best Actor Award of 2005 are Liang Chaowei, Liu Dehua, Zhang Xueyou and Qin Guan. It's really a galaxy of talent!"

"Let's open the envelope quickly to find out who the lucky guy is!"

Cai opened the envelope and the master of the ceremony walked on the stage with the award. The audience suddenly realized that there would be two winners that year!

Chapter 810: Sun

This was a violation of the festival's rules. During previous ceremonies, there had only been one winner. The two awards implied that the organizing committee had made an exception.

The unprecedented result made everyone excited, but it also made it difficult to make predictions.

Even Zhang Xueyou had cheered up. Two of the four nominees would get an award, so his possibilities of winning had increased.

Cai Kangyong announced the result amid the chaos, "The winners of the Best Actor Award are Qin Guan and Liu Dehua!"

Applause followed the screams as everyone congratulated the winners.

Qin Guan, who was the younger one, stood up first and gestured at Liu to walk before him. Liu stood up and hugged Qin Guan.

Then Qin Guan embraced Liang Chaowei in an effort to comfort him. The smiling, quiet man took this chance to whisper to Qin Guan, "Well done! He only won half an award!" You were hoping that I would win the entire thing?

Zhang Xueyou smiled at him. "Hello, half-winner!" Thank you so much!

Qin Guan and Liu Dehua got on the stage and accepted the two horse figure awards, which looked exactly the same. Then they clanged their awards to congratulate each other. It was like a toast to victory, a clash of weapons between two warriors. The gesture expressed the subtle friendship between the two men.

The cameras recorded the scene, which made their speeches seem inferior in comparison. Then, the actors walked off the stage and the ceremony drew closer to the end. The final award, which was the Best Drama Award, was about to be announced to the public.

Lu Chuan, who was sitting with Wu Yusen, Du Qifeng and Li Yunchan, felt nervous. He only relaxed when Lin Zhiling read the result out loud in her childlike voice.

"The winner is 'Ke Ke Xi Li' by Lu Chuan! Congratulations! This is the second time that a film from the Chinese mainland wins. Does this imply that the film circles on both sides of the Taiwanese Channel will have more chances of cooperating in the future?"

He had succeeded! A film from the Chinese mainland had gotten Taiwan's approval!

Lu Chuan got off the stage with tears in his eyes, while Cai made his closing speech. The 2005 Golden Horse Festival had caused a storm in the Chinese film circle, not because of the quality of the films or its reform, but because of the gossip surrounding the two actors.

The next day, the tabloids in Taiwan and Hong Kong were filled with all kinds of gossip.

"Was Liang Chaowei isolated by the other candidates?"

"Liang failed to get along with the other nominees."

"Does the two-time award-winning actor want to compromise with the Chinese mainland?"

"The entertainment circle always predicts changes in the economy."

There were many pro-independence individuals, as well as people against the Chinese mainland, in Taiwan, so these news met their taste.

In Hong Kong, people were reading the news about handsome Wu Yanzu with relish.

"Qin Guan shook hands with Wu Yanzu and complimented his looks!"

"Did Qin Guan have a crisis awareness with Wu?"

"Who is the most handsome actor nowadays?"

The shameless titles were full of conspiracy theories, but the objective reports of the Golden Horse Festival were ignored by the readers.

Meanwhile, the media of the Chinese mainland, who were always extremely patriotic, narrated the events that had taken place during the festival. A photo of Qin Guan and Liu Dehua took up the main part of their front pages.

"Two winners on the same stage. Our film won!"

"Golden Horse broke the knot. Films from the Chinese mainland get more chances!"

It was an impressive achievement by a great, proud country.

Reporters from other Asian countries kept pace with China, praising the actors as much as they could.

Some fans watched the film again and found it filled with obscure information. Unfortunately, the film was not distributed in foreign countries. The fans tried their best to download it from Qin Guan's blog in America and used heavy Chinese-English dictionaries to translate it.

American fans knew nothing about the festival though. To the average American citizen, the US was the whole universe. A festival on a small island meant nothing to them. They knew absolutely nothing about traditional Chinese film awards. They didn't even understand the importance of award ceremonies in non-English-speaking countries.

A famous gossip newspaper in Hong Kong.

Chapter 811: Filming In The Louvre

"I'm not satisfied with Qin Guan's new award. It's the Chinese Golden Horse Award. It's no American or European award. It's even inferior to an international 9A-level film festival."

"Besides, he has to share the honor with another Chinese actor. I felt wronged on his behalf."

"Please return to our embrace, Qin Guan. Please! This is unfair for you!"

Some Chinese students couldn't help but try to explain.

"The Golden Horse Festival has been taking place for over 50 years. It's very influential in the Chinese film circle. The man standing beside Qin Guan is a renowned actor named Liu Dehua. He is an older actor with more than 20 years of experience. Have you seen the film 'House of Flying Daggers'? He was the protagonist!"

"What the hell is that?"

"It's a Chinese martial arts film. Its box office sucked..."

After a heated discussion, everyone said that they thought very highly of Qin Guan's performance in "Ke Ke Xi Li".

As a result, Columbia Pictures contacted Qin Guan to get the distributing rights of the film. Qin Guan's film would be screened in indie cinemas all over North America.

Thanks to Qin Guan's appeal in America, as well as the attention the two award-winning actors received, the film made back some of Huayi's money. Actually, it had originally been created just to get an award.

In one month, the film's total box office in North America was 3.08 million, which was definitely better than "Elephant".

The hits of the video on Chinese websites were also rising. People

had become very interested in the film, which was more than enough for Huayi. The money they made was like pennies falling from Heaven.

All thanks to Qin Guan!

When they came back to their senses, they realized the guy had disappeared from China. Soon, his firm released his upcoming schedule.

He hadn't returned to America, as everyone had thought. He had rushed to France instead, where the staff of Columbia Pictures would meet him.

Yes, the company had invested in him again.

The mysterious meeting was about the film "The Da Vinci Code". It was rare for a film to talk about religious beliefs so openly.

As soon as the novel had been adapted into a script, the company and Ronald William Howard, who was the director, had started being pressured from all sides. The crew had received thousands of letters of protest. Despite the threats of the Catholic union and its societies though, they had chosen to keep filming in secret.

One of the most important scenes was supposed to take place in the Louvre Museum in France, so Qin Guan had to fly to Paris to meet them. The famous painting of "Mona Lisa" was an important plot point of the film.

Meanwhile, the crew would select a French actress for their journey in France.

Qin Guan didn't understand why they were so confident until he checked in at a hotel near the Louvre. Salvador, the head of the Italian Mafia family, had invested in the film when he had found out that they needed immediate help. He had even helped them rent some important locations.

The origin of his confidence was the Asian man he had only met once before.

He had actually been searching in Italy for a long time for a good film, but his effort had been in vain. He was a picky guy, yet "The Da Vinci Code" suited his taste.

The film was full of horror and suspense, and people had to use their brains while watching it. The brave man paid no attention to its annoying religious elements.

Qin Guan didn't have to focus on the job at such an early stage. He had only one question in mind: where were the director and the producer? The crew gave him and Wang Liying a surprising answer.

"They received a call from Chirac while they had been casting actors in France."

"Chirac who? The one I have in mind?"

"Yes, the French president."

"Okay, go on."

"They will have a meeting today for about an hour. I think they will talk about renting the Louvre."

Qin Guan became nervous. "Will they lend us the original 'Mona Lisa'?"

"That's impossible! The director of the museum has come up with another plan though. They found a copy and sent it to us a few days ago. They said that it was a contribution to our film. The copy is also an antique. It's really fine, it looks exactly like the real one. Even a famous painter wouldn't be able to tell them apart."

Chapter 812: Tough Penance

Qin Guan put forward a second question.

"Is there a Catholic church willing to rent their hall out to us?"

"Um... Actually, we've had some successful negotiations. Our success rate is 60%."

"How many churches did you contact?"

"Three."

Okay, they had a long way to go. Qin Guan knew that renting a church was expensive, but the firm wanted to spend up to 100,000 pounds on it.

"So?"

"We lost Westminster, but Lincoln and Rosslyn are good alternatives. We'll use them for the interior scenes. They are Catholic abbeys after all. They contradict our film with their orthodox ideas."

"Branch churches do not think much of the film. They just want to promote their doctrines."

Qin Guan was Chinese, so he was not under much pressure. The Chinese tended to tolerate different schools of religion, as most of them just believed in themselves.

Thus, Qin Guan didn't take the situation seriously.

A few hours later, the director and producer returned with great news. Thanks to the approval of the French president, they could film in the museum and in the actual room where "Mona Lisa" was.

The government had offered its support for the sake of the French actress and supporting male actor. Besides, the film glorified the French police, which made a good impression on the president.

Politics were all about propaganda, so a Hollywood film would be the best way to show the world the best side of their country.

The three sides had reached a strange compromise. Except for Qin Guan, who was an actor registered in the American Union, there was no other American actor joining the cast. Even the figurants all came from the UK and France.

To be honest, portraying a Harvard professor was the perfect job for Qin Guan. He was the actor with the highest level of education in the entertainment circle after all.

In the first scene, he would be giving a guest lecture about semiotics at a French university. It would be as simple as drinking water for him.

The following night, Qin Guan was standing on a podium. On the large screen behind him were different pictures that changed as he spoke.

Qin Guan exceeded the director's expectations. His lecture was so good that one would have thought that he was an expert on semiotics himself.

The credit belonged to Professor Mark though. Qin Guan had just copied his words and actions.

While he was signing his own book for the students, the director couldn't help but pay him a compliment. This actor looks like an academic!

Qin Guan's suit made him look like a puritanical, powerful professor. The talented students talked with him with worship in their eyes.

A few policemen broke in and interrupted them. A good friend of his had been murdered. Before dying, he had left several symbols in the Louvre. Nobody knew what they meant, so as an expert, Qin Guan had attracted the attention of the French police. They wanted to cooperate with him to find the killer.

Qin Guan finished his long scene in one take. Howard, who was a guy who noticed details, looked like he was choking.

He decided to vent his frustration on the poor killer. The unlucky man was a friar who would be punishing himself in the next scene. One could imagine the misery of the English actor.

Qin Guan, who was a sympathetic guy, was reminded by Wang to follow them. He took a bag of snacks with him.

He was only going for fun.

...

There were still a few traditional friars in some Catholic abbeys. Their school used to prevail in the Middle Ages, but was now experiencing a decline. Those guys tortured their own flesh to repent for their sins and experience the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

Their method was to beat their backs with thick, heavy whips late at night. The sincere men beat themselves until their skin split and their flesh broke as they suffered through the pain of the Father.

The killer was one of them.

Chapter 813: Jean Reno

At first, Qin Guan was just enjoying his snacks. As he looked at the accumulating scars on the actor's back though, he started feeling uneasy. He believed it was necessary for him to study any relative knowledge.

Qin Guan threw his snacks away and returned to the hotel, where he asked help from a Columbia professor. Prof. Beak, who was glad to receive his request, sent a large amount of material to Qin Guan through email.

He told Qin Guan that the most valuable knowledge was gathered in churches and libraries. A few secret doctrines were even passed down from mouth to mouth. Some basic knowledge would be enough for Qin Guan's role though.

The honest young man began studying from the very beginning. Actually, if he read everything, he could possibly graduate from a theological school.

He would have the gift of his extraordinary memory to thank for that. The next day, he appeared in the Louvre with red eyes. He had already gotten a general idea about the basic knowledge of the Catholic Church.

That explained why his schedule was so tight. The director had omitted most of the dark parts of the church's history. If they were confronted by any radical believers, they would risk losing their lives.

Thus, Qin Guan began to take his job more seriously. In the next scene, he would be cooperating with Jean Reno, a representative of the European acting school who had starred in "Leon The Professional".

The experienced actor was more than 30 years older than Qin Guan. He was also one of his idols, so Qin Guan decided to try his

best to impress him.

The semiologist finally met the detective before the pyramid of the Louvre.

It was a beautiful night in Paris. The golden pyramid was sparkling in the dark as Qin Guan walked in the museum slowly, surrounded by cameras.

The solemn, vast hall was one of the most artistic places in the world.

The sound of their steps echoed inside and their shadows expanded in the moonlight. The atmosphere was already depressing, but Jean's questions made it even stranger.

He doubted that Qin Guan was the killer, but he still asked him some provoking questions.

"How come you are so familiar with the security measures of the museum?"

"How do you know where the director died?"

Actually, the smart semiologist had guessed all this information by looking at a photo of the place.

Only when he saw the corpse did Qin Guan understand the detective's words. Before dying, the director had drawn a circle with his own blood, which he had taken from his bleeding stomach. Then he had taken off his clothes and lay down in the circle to complete the symbol.

What kind of symbol was it? This symbol had cost his life. The weird semiologist was feeling very suspicious.

Long shots made the audience engage in the story. This was an advantage for actors shooting suspense films, yet the director zoomed in on Qin Guan's face repeatedly. His features expanded infinitely like pupils dilating. Qin Guan passed the test without even being aware of it.

The director didn't tell anyone, but he decided to keep the outstanding shots. The details of the actor's face were both mysterious and beautiful. This was the beauty of horror.

Qin Guan and Jean finished their lines and stared at each other for a long time in front of the corpse. The camera was still rolling. They were just communicating through their eyes.

Jean: What is everyone doing?

Qin Guan: No idea.

Jean: Ask the director.

Qin Guan: Why should I do it? I'm too afraid.

Jean: You are the younger one.

Qin Guan: Okay.

The corpse nearly burst into tears. Are you done?

"Cut! Perfect!"

The first confrontation between Qin Guan and Jean Reno was finished successfully. The prime suspect escaped with the help of the heroine.

Chapter 814: The Zurich Bank

When the scene was finished, everyone let out a long sigh of relief. Qin Guan hung out in the hall, totally absorbed into the art palace. Even the beautiful French actress looked inferior compared to the masterpieces around them.

Most of them were high-quality imitations of the originals, but one day every week, the museum would reveal the original to the public.

Walking in the significant hall in the quiet night was a great shock to the visitors. Qin Guan secretly gestured for his assistant to take pictures.

His feelings were similar to those of a starlet wearing Armani for the first time. Qin Guan felt like he was swimming in the long river of art history as he caressed the frames with pride under Wang's annoyed gaze.

Unfortunately, beautiful moments were always short. The next scene would begin soon. The French president had only granted them a limited amount of time. The museum would open to the public the next morning as usual, so they had to finish filming as soon as possible.

After a short break, Qin Guan was pulled back to the set again. The poor guy who played the corpse lay down on the bed.

As an expert, Qin Guan found the evidence suspicious.

"No, it's not the Fibonacci sequence. It's just some kind of code that uses it wrong. If my brain is not fooling me, it must be a logograph."

He reached this conclusion by using his eyes instead of a pen or any other tools. The actress looked at him in surprise. "Do you have high-definition eyes?"

Qin Guan had to act humble. "They are not that good, no. But I

can memorize most things."

He did some mental calculations to figure out the final answer and then wrote it down in his notebook.

"Leonardo Da Vinci, Mona Lisa." After getting the first code sequence, they ran to the "Mona Lisa" room, where they discovered the second code sequence, as well as the director's blood.

By then, Jean had realized he had been fooled and rushed back to the museum. Time was pressing. Qin Guan had to memorize the code with his eyes and brain.

The lonely sight of his back in the dark occupied every frame. This required great expressive force and control from the actor. That was why people considered horror films the ultimate test for one's acting skills. Just screaming and using exaggerated body language couldn't convince the audience.

Plus, Qin Guan was portraying a calm scholar, which set even higher standards for him.

Qin Guan and the director's granddaughter found a mysterious cross at the back of another Da Vinci painting and tried to escape from Jean like wanted criminals.

When their job that night came to an end, everyone breathed out in relief. The real director of the Louvre had been watching them work with a distrustful expression in his eyes.

He considered every member of the crew a guest of his. That unreliable president! This is a big insult to art. I'll write a letter of complaint to him every day till the crew f*cks off!

Howard ran away quickly with the camera. He dared not disclose the nature of the next scenes to the director, for fear that he would suffer a heart attack.

The following night, they would go to the famous red-light district near the Braun Forest Park, which was a man's heaven. French girls in revealing clothes were idling all around that area.

This was a different side of the fashion capital.

Cars were driving by at a low speed. In that area, which was far beyond the reach of the police, Qin Guan would have plenty of time to study the cross.

The cross was actually a key of the Zurich Bank. Its form and laser holes implied that extraordinary things were hiding in the place it would unlock. That bank had the greatest security in the world and its storage method had a long history. Nobles during ancient times used to hide their fortune there, like a dragon hiding treasure in its cave.

The key was passed down from generation to generation, along with the bank's logo. The bank had been upgraded, and so had the key, but the family crest on it remained the same. It was a symbol of old money. That, in combination with the code, achieved a double level of security.

The bank was loyal to its clients, even if they were criminals. The ancient confidentiality agreements and special arrangements made by the noble families were followed strictly by the managers.

Chapter 815: The Terrible Force Of Faith

When the night manager identified the heroine as the key's rightful owner, he helped them escape before the police arrived.

What considerate service! What a perfect bank! As he was running, Qin Guan decided to rent a safe at a Swiss bank. His fortune was average for a businessman, but he thought very highly of the service of Swiss banks.

Hawkes Street was where most banks in Switzerland were gathered. There were not just native banks there though, but some branches of famous foreign banks as well. The place was a miniature of Switzerland's national principle, which was that private property was above everything else.

During the break, Qin Guan had a talk with the consultant, who was a real manager of the Swiss Bank.

"Is it complicated to get an account at a Swiss Bank?"

"Not at all. It's just like opening an account at a normal bank, except our employees can't read your paperwork. You can remain anonymous, use a fake name, or even a code. Actually, your only identity here is your key and code. Our bank is the safest, most convenient and private place to keep your fortune."

"A cheque with our logo is a symbol of high status. Even the police can't ask questions about the capital's origin. Our methods can be dated back to before banks even came into existence."

Qin Guan nodded, which made the manager get excited.

"Please allow me to introduce the VIP services our bank offers. All the services mentioned in the film are included, but we can also offer more if you pay more."

"Our bottom limit for VIP clients is five million dollars. The richer you are though, the more privileges you would enjoy..."

So, it's a safe international system. Qin Guan decided to send Chen Kang to talk to the manager later.

The man's next words made him change his mind though.

"There's no bank interest, and you will have to pay annual fees for capital management."

Why should I deposit my money at your bank then?

"The Chinese embassy has an agreement with the Swiss government, so Chinese accounts are under strict control. It will take you two months to open an account here."

So why should I open an account there? The inheritance tax in China is not as high as in other countries.

That bank serviced people who were trying to hide the origin of their money. For Chinese people with traditional values, this was really hard to accept.

Qin Guan still made a decision. He was a young businessman after all. Getting interest from a bank did not correspond with his status.

I have to open an account! The upside is, it would encourage me to make money!

His tight schedule didn't allow him to wait in Switzerland, so Chen Kang rushed to the city happily and got lost in the streets. He was totally captivated by the place, which was full of gold and money. Before he could come back to his senses, Qin Guan had gotten to work in the UK.

An American tycoon had lent the crew an old castle he had just bought. The castle, which had been built during medieval times, was a perfect place for historians.

There were historical frescos, ancient European fireplaces and old long tables inside. The place looked like a cradle of crime and secrets.

This was the first time in film history that the origins and history of Christianity were analyzed by a scholar. Even a guy without any knowledge on religion would understand everything.

Of course, the film would be a real puzzle for dumb people, but anyone with a basic level of education would be able to understand after some carefully thinking. It was an objective presentation of information, without any religious bias or radical opinions. That explained why the Catholic unions had been sending threatening letters to the crew, even though everyone had left for the UK.

Those people would never accept that Jesus had only been a Jewish mortal.

Suddenly, the professor voiced an even more terrible theory. The Knights Templar, also known as the Priory of Sion, had been protecting a person with Jesus' blood from ancient times. If this was proved, Jesus would descend to the earth, for it indirectly attested that he had been a mere mortal.

Chapter 816: Emergency

This was a soul-stirring, outrageous suggestion. The crew was really brave to keep filming. Actually, this would be a small-scale confrontation and mutual compromise between modern society and religious groups.

In today's rapidly-developing society, it was impossible to huckster religious belief like back in medieval times. This was due to the constant awareness of human self and the freedom of belief that every individual enjoyed.

Still, Columbia Pictures had invested in the film, Howard had chosen to direct it, and Qin Guan had accepted the leading role without hesitation.

China was not the religion's origin after all. Christians had sent many missionaries to China, but they had still failed to convert the Chinese.

Actually, these lines were not Qin Guan's, but Ian McKellen's. Lovers of American films would be familiar with the name, as he was the actor who had portrayed Gandalf in "The Lord of the Rings" and Magneto in "X-Men".

He was an outstanding experienced actor, who had also sacrificed a lot for the film. He had been under even more pressure than Qin Guan.

The next scene would be the climax of the film. It was too late for the killer and the bishop of the Opus Dei to realize they had been cheated. The principal conspirator was the lame old man who had taught Qin Guan. He was a crazy scholar obsessed with Jesus' mortality, who aimed to find out the secret of the Holy Grail and pull Jesus off the altar.

Thus, he had hijacked Qin Guan and the heroine at the Templar Church in London to reveal the secret before the entire world.

In the end, their 100,000-pound budget had been enough. The bustling church had been cleared during the daytime, and all the equipment had been moved to the halls not open to the public.

Qin Guan was standing opposite Ian. The clever villain was aiming a gun at Qin Guan, but the scholar was refusing to cooperate with him.

"On your knees!" The low voice of the mighty old man was filled with power.

Bang!

Qin Guan did as he was told without hesitation. The heroine was about to join him, but Ian stopped her.

"You don't need to. You are the key. Open the key-stone and I'll let you go!"

Before his calm, fanatical voice could fade away, the camera turned to Qin Guan. A gun was resting on his head, His life was literally in a madman's hands.

"Open it, or he will die." It was a crazy, unreasonable threat.

Suddenly, Qin Guan stood up and grabbed the tube from the heroine's hands. "As you wish. I'll do it."

There was a stunned expression in Ian's eyes as Qin Guan used all his strength to destroy the sophisticated tube that held the secret map. He wanted to put an end to this silly war. Once the tube was destroyed, the origin of the conflict would vanish.

Clang!

The tube fell to the ground. Qin Guan looked at it calmly. No one could guess what he was thinking. He was in the dark, the camera rising as it followed his legs. He looked determined.

"Cut!"

Suddenly, Jean Reno broke in and put an end to the most tense scene of the entire film. Everyone relaxed. Even though the film

was not completed yet, Qin Guan could foresee its bright future.

Despite all the pressure the crew had been under, the film reached its end at the entrance of the Louvre.

The crew, who had travelled to many major European cities for the film, celebrated the end of the project. They could have a good night's sleep that night. No more working overnight at strange locations.

This pleasant time did not last long though. As they began to talk about the celebrating banquet, there was suddenly an emergency. A few policemen drove by slowly and sped down to warn them about the danger.

"Return to your hotel! Quick! Stay in your rooms and close all the doors and windows. No more filming! Leave! Now!"

What had happened?

When they saw the guards of the Louvre return to the museum and close the steel gate, they knew that something important must have happened. It was better to obey the rules considering that they were in a foreign country.

Qin Guan had experienced similar situations in America, so he remained calm during the emergency. The crew drove off towards the hotel fast, only to realize that the road ahead was on fire.

Chapter 817: The Motherland's Help

"F*ck! It's blocked!"

Before the driver's curse could fade away, Qin Guan saw several suspicious guys walking up to them with weapons.

"Keep moving!"

"Okay!" Everyone felt the danger getting closer.

Half-blooded youngsters holding stones and steel pipes were hiding in dark corners of the city like robbers. They destroyed and burned cars along the streets.

Bang! A blare came from afar. It had to be an explosion-hazard siren.

"Attention, please! Keep moving! We'll find another way to the hotel!" The calm French driver started sweating.

The small-scale suburban chaos had spread downtown. The attackers didn't look like unarmed rebels, but an organized group. It was too dangerous to keep driving in the city.

The car in front of them suddenly screeched to a halt. Another road was blocked by a mob of armed policemen.

"Turn around! Reverse! Don't get involved!"

Dealing with bombs and explosions would be dangerous for anyone. "What should I do?"

All the roads had been blocked. They were in a dilemma.

"F*ck! Those French guys are so much trouble!"

Jean wasted no time in making fun of English actors in return. As a native, he knew that this area was not safe.

"Would the Louvre give us shelter in case of an emergency?"

"Impossible!" Jean shook his head at Qin Guan. "Their steel gates close if the artwork is in danger. They do not even disclose who or

what poses a threat to them. The building must be under siege now. We won't get in."

In some Parisians' eyes, artwork was even more precious than human lives.

They were unfortunately trapped in this reality. As everyone fell into a depressed silence, Qin Guan pondered the issue and asked another question.

"But the main street is still clear. Can't we just drive down that road till we get to a safe place?"

"That road can only be used by the police. If the main street was blocked, the city would be compromised."

"Is there a shelter around this area then?"

"No, this is a sight-seeing area. Next thing you'll be asking to climb up the Arch of Triumph!"

Okay, Jean Reno was clearly not a killer. He was just a kind French guy.

Qin Guan sighed sorrowfully. Suddenly, he had an idea.

"I know! I can drive to the Chinese embassy down the street! It's not far from here! Wang, call the embassy! Let's go, director!"

All the British and French actors looked at Qin Guan as if he was an idiot. Even though they were natives, they hadn't thought of taking refuge in the City Hall or a police station, yet that foreigner had dared make a direct call to the embassy!

Wang Liying was a smart girl, so she contacted the embassy and cleared the situation in a few seconds. When they got a definite response, they headed straight to the embassy.

No one cared about speed limit violations now, so they drove down the street at full speed.

"There are still 200 meters left between the main street and the embassy. How will we cover that distance?"

"Just rush!"

"If there are still policemen around..."

"That's impossible!"

"Why?" Jean had suddenly stopped talking. He had seen a smooth path cleared by some ordinary men. The embassy was quiet amid the noisy downtown area.

The guards helped them get into the embassy and get out of the cars. They only felt safe and able to relax again when the gate was closed behind them.

Chapter 818: The Most Thoughtful Aid

An embassy employee helped the crew settle in the hall. Then he greeted them and began to ask questions.

"Hello. May I know who is seeking help? Please fill in the form at the reception. We'll be on standby the whole day, in case of an emergency."

A girl in a blue uniform began to give out paper cups.

"Would you like some water? Has anyone been injured? Would you like something to eat?"

As he heard the last question, Qin Guan couldn't help but lift his hands up. "Me! I need food!" Everyone fixed their eyes on him. He felt like a firefly in the dark.

"Wow! Is that Qin Guan?"

"Yes! His assistant called us! The receptionist is a fan of his, so... You know..."

"Wait, who is that guy? Oh, my!"

"It's Jean Reno! What are they doing? Are they shooting a new film?"

"I love Leon so much. I'll ask him for an autograph later. I could show it off to my French colleagues!"

The atmosphere in the hall became animated as the staff began to order food for them.

A Cantonese restaurant near the embassy was about to close because of the riots, but the call from the Chinese embassy changed the cook's mind. It was a big order during a good night for business. Dozens of people were waiting for food.

The boss was confident about the embassy's security, so he accepted the order happily.

According to the Cantonese cuisine, the ideal supper was rice in a clay pot. This was a rare dish from South China that was usually served in large portions. Even in France, the taste remained the same. Dozens of clay pots were resting in a row on the fire. In 20 minutes, the rice was half-cooked. The cook began to pour juice on it and add Chinese sausages, roasted pork and char siu on the sticky grains.

Then he covered them and cooked them on the fire.

Not long after, the rice was soaked in sweet juices and seasoning and turned crisp and yellow. Then the cook added some boiled vegetable leaves on the pork.

A heavy basket was sent to the embassy through a secret channel in the backyard of the restaurant. Actually, it was just a rope with a few hooks.

"We'll pay you tomorrow as usual. It's too late tonight."

"No problem. Thank you for your patronage. The receipt is at the bottom."

"Okay! Watch the door. You better not go home tonight."

"Okay!"

The embassy staff pulled the basket up through the window. This was the first time the crew would experience the charm of Chinese cuisine.

The foreigners were confused as they held the clay pots in their hands. The embassy is treating us to soup?

Qin Guan opened the lid and the scent of meat and rice filled the hall. The white rice, red sausages, pork and vegetables looked very appetizing. Jean's stomach growled at the smell. Everyone was hungry after what they had been through.

An embassy employee handed out spoons, trying her best to suppress her laughter. Everyone fixed their eyes on Qin Guan,

waiting to see what he would do.

Qin Guan poured a small packet of sauce on the edge of the pot. They were all waiting to see how the sauce was used. Should we dip the meat into it or mix it with the rice? Qin Guan gave them a different answer.

He just soaked all the ingredients in the sauce. As he stuffed a spoonful into his mouth, no one could remain calm anymore.

Chapter 819: Famous

Everyone gorged themselves with delicate moves. The elegant French men and gentle British men went crazy over the Chinese dishes.

All the embassy employees were shocked. The crew was behaving like convicts that had just been released from prison.

Wang Liying didn't forget her responsibilities as she was eating. News about the riots in Paris were spreading online all over the world. The news were quite striking. Because of the time difference, it was 5:00 a.m. in China, but 4:00 p.m. in America.

As a result, the Americans were the first to hear the news. Wang turned on her laptop and saw anxious fans talking about the riots. The latest news about Qin Guan on his blog had actually been about his trip to France, so everyone was worried about their idol. Is he in danger?

Some European fans were following the news in real time. The crisis had spread from France to Germany and Belgium. Wang Liying waved at Qin Guan hurriedly. "Say cheese!" Qin Guan automatically grinned at her with his spoon in his mouth.

Click!

Wang uploaded the photo on the blog and added a few words.

"Thank you for your concern. We are at the Chinese embassy in France, enjoying some friendly dinner. Everything is going well!"

The news acted like a shark in a pond, suddenly stirring up the water.

"Ha! He is safe! I can sleep through the night now."

"Yay! Safety first!"

"Why is he at the embassy? Is it dangerous outside?"

"Take a careful look at the photo. There are so many people and

equipment around. They must have been filming."

"They must be trapped inside now."

"Anyway, it's definitely dangerous. Otherwise, they wouldn't have gone to the embassy."

"The Chinese embassy seems safe. They are enjoying some dinner!"

"What are they eating?"

"It's rice in a clay pot."

Everyone relaxed as they looked at the warm photo and forgot about the issue at hand.

Things improved at night, so some embassy guards escorted them back to their hotel. God was finally favoring them again, so they managed to reach the hotel safely.

The burned cars were still on the road, but the hotel had strengthened its security force. Everyone fell asleep after such an exhausting day.

It was a night without dreams.

The next morning, Qin Guan stood by the window, looking at the messy street below. There were barricades, destroyed weapons and traces of fire everywhere. The battle had been really fierce the previous night, but thanks to the Chinese embassy, they had managed to dodge a bullet.

The prestige of the Chinese embassy was known both at home and abroad.

The crew bid each other farewell at the airport. After a long journey, Qin Guan got off the plane and stood on the lawn of the Capital Airport. He felt steady and safe immediately.

He was really happy when he read the feedback online.

"The Chinese embassy is so powerful! They can protect you in

case of an emergency!"

"Of course. You could also apply for political asylum!"

"China responds quickly to natural disasters."

"Foreign countries are inferior to China's upper-level mechanisms."

"During an earthquake or a flood, the government will send aid everywhere. There is no difference between a remote area and an urban area."

"You have a point!"

Some people used their own countries as an example. In Japan, where natural disasters happened frequently, most people tried to help each other.

In Africa, people had to think of subsistence first.

Even in North America and Europe, it was hard to organize an effective, unified rescue mission after a natural disaster.

Chapter 820: Jewellery

The year had almost ended. It was time for Qin Guan to close his accounts.

He had to make an evaluation of his total assets, so he arranged a short interview with the editor of "Forbes Asia" and sent a confirmation letter to "The Times".

That would be all the work he had to do at the threshold of 2006.

At the end of each year, "The Times" would typically select the 50 most beautiful ladies and 50 most handsome gentlemen from all over the world. It was not a strict selection, it was just meant to entertain the readers. The selection was based on looks, bearing, background and international influence.

It was a tradition of the magazine, as well as a good method to promote sales. All the editors put their hearts and souls into the project.

Qin Guan's employees were confident about their boss. They were sure that he would be one of the top 50 men considering his looks and achievements.

They didn't need to spend too much time on this, so they got busy working on the list and statistics for "Forbes China".

The Forbes ranking lists had just entered China. There were currently two lists in sync with the global ones, the Forbes China Rich People List and the Forbes China Celebrity List.

As the names suggested, the first one was for businessmen and the second one was for influential members of the Chinese entertainment and sports circle. Although they were in different fields, they had the exact same significance.

Thus, Qin Guan's annual assets would be very important.

Even though he was a professional accountant, Qin Guan was still

shocked by his total assets. I have so much! The billionaire was caught off guard by his fortune.

QC Group Accounting Firm: 17.35 million

Entertainment Studio: 66 million

Huayi Brothers Shares: 7.5 million

Beauty Of The World: 3.3 million

LESS/MORE Apparel Co. Ltd.: 13.5 million

Personal fixed assets:

Wanda Commercial Street: 9 million

Apartment and Villa (China, United States): 6 million

His total assets were worth approximately \$130 million.

Qin Guan was now aware of his new identity as a billionaire. As for the celebrity list, he had no particular interest in it.

He had made another investment on Ning Hao. In the spring, they would be working on "Crazy Stone". Everything was ready, when suddenly Wang's phone rang.

After a short while, she hung up and showed Qin Guan her phone. The short message on the screen amused him.

"We would appreciate it if you contributed to the upcoming 2006 Spring Festival Gala."

"The suggested performances are as follows: sketches, crosstalk, singing and dancing, stage plays..."

"Request: The subject should promote socially positive energy..."

It was an invitation from the organizing committee of the Spring Festival Gala. Qin Guan threw the phone back at Wang.

"No. I'm not a starlet eager for some fame. The relations between all sides are really complicated at CCTV. They have to protect the dignity of the senior actors. I'll just be wasting energy without

earning anything in return."

"There are so many outstanding singers and dancers in China. I don't want to be teaching fish how to swim."

"What should I tell them then?"

"Just ignore them. Tell them I'm busy. I'll find something to do so they have no reason to blame me. Oh, right. Tell Diamond that I'll do the poster!"

Less trouble and more profit!

Qin Guan took advantage of the situation to escape all the end-of-the-year business banquets and tiresome social responsibilities of the entertainment circle.

Sister Zhang was happy to receive a call from Wang Liying. Diamond had already taken care of the lawsuit with Tiffany over the traditional jade accessories and occidental jewellery.

Nowadays, it was more difficult to hire Qin Guan as an ambassador, as he had established his own brand. Most fashion brands shrank back. According to the conventions of the fashion circle, perfumes, accessories and cosmetics were related to clothing.

An ambitious man would turn his clothing brand into a group brand.

Fortunately, the jewellery industry was beyond the scope. There was no conflict between them, which explained Sister Zhang's confidence.

Plus, jade and pearls only maximized their value in China.

Chapter 821: A Good Example For Models

Sister Zhang attached great importance to Qin Guan's presence, so she had hired Photographer Zhang to shoot the poster. Zhang was the photographer who had taken Qin Guan's first modelling pictures. It was thanks to those photos that he had become a rising star in the photography circle. He was so excited to have another chance to cooperate with Qin Guan.

Many years ago, both of them had been nobodies, but now they could succeed together.

Actually, a model was not necessary for a jewellery poster.

The sparkling diamonds, gentle jade and elegant pearls didn't need to be compared to someone else, but people liked stars. A good ambassador would make them spend their money eagerly.

That was the reason behind the poster.

Qin Guan went out of the fitting room in a common white shirt and a black blazer. He would act as a background for the jewellery, so he had to maintain a low profile. A revealing outfit would steal the show and outshine the jewellery, which would not be a proper high-end fashion concept.

The crew turned the background lights down. The jewellery was on a tray covered by black velvet. It was a ring with 26 diamonds and a green jade in the middle. The base was made of platinum.

Before entering the set, Qin Guan slid it on his middle finger. The traditional jade ring followed the ancient philosophy of Feng Shui.

In order to attract wealth and fortune, one had to wear it on their middle finger. The green treasure cost millions of yuan.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes!"

The big lights started going out one by one, leaving only a weak

light in the corner. The jewellery was brilliant on its own. It didn't need any external light.

Qin Guan sat by the table and crossed his hands before his face. The audience would only be able to see his sparkling eyes and slender hands.

The ring on his hand was the protagonist. The dark background made the light freckles and Qin Guan's eyes shine with a green light. Green stood for hope and life.

The crew's eyes shuttled between the ring and his eyes. They were both just as resplendent.

As photographer Zhang held the expensive equipment in his hands, he felt like he had gone back in time to years ago, when he had been trying his best to find work. Inspiration suddenly hit him again.

He pressed on the shutter, torturing the film.

"Okay! Perfect!" Then he waved at his assistant. "Fetch some film for me. As much as possible!"

This was a good chance to take some photos for his collection. Maybe one of them would win him an award. Of course, he would sign a contract with Qin Guan.

By the time the assistant returned with the film, the second series of photos were half-way finished.

Qin Guan hid half of his face in the dark, showing only his jaw to the camera. He was holding a braided rope, at the end of which was a sparkling crystal green jade pedant.

The pedant was on his lips. The cool jade and his hot lips were a perfect match. Using the same setting, background and outfit, Qin Guan managed to create two completely different pictures.

The scene was imprinted in everyone's memory. Even photographer Zhang couldn't help but mentally praise his

intelligence.

The model understood the theme clearly. Although he was an international award-winning actor, he saw himself as a supporting actor next to the product. The jewellery was not the star of a photo album, but a commercial poster.

Chapter 822: CCTV's Attention

Qin Guan's dedication earned everyone's applause when the final picture was taken. They all expressed their heartfelt love for the model. Despite this honor, Qin Guan remained a strict, honest professional. This was the reason behind his success.

Qin Guan was paid one million for his work. He stuffed the cheque in his pocket to ease the pain caused by the two small jewellery cases. These were his prey at the Diamond headquarters.

He loved the jade bracelets so much... They were as green as a pond in the forest. He bought a dark green one for his mother and a light green one for Cong Nianwei. He loved his job!

...

The happy days passed quickly as Qin Guan finished reading the tall pile of scripts. When he looked up, he saw the latest Forbes ranking list on his desk.

2005 Chinese Celebrity List

1st place: Yao Ming, 150 million

2nd place: Qin Guan, 130 million

3rd place: Zhang Ziyi, 37 million

4th place: Liu Xiang...

One year ago, he had not made the top 10, but now he was second! The only one ahead of him was Yao Ming, who was a Chinese NBA superstar. Nearly everyone in China knew his name.

Liu Xiang, who had been a nobody one year ago, beat other stars like Li Lianjie, which showed the national pride of the Chinese.

The list was not that important to Qin Guan, as his fame was big enough for his status. Next, he picked up the fortune ranking list with interest.

The bottom limit for the 2005 list was 500 million RMB. There were 396 Chinese citizens who had met that requirement. Qin Guan found his own name quickly. It was among three other capable entrepreneurs.

This was an honor reserved for industrialists and real estate businessmen, not superstars that made quick money. Everyone on the list had been a benefactor of their country.

Qin Guan was happy about his decision. He had relied on his QC accounting firm, and when that had gotten on the right track, he had founded his own entertainment company. If he hadn't acted right, he would have been considered an outsider by the rest of the circle.

He also found two acquaintances on the list. The Wang Brothers had ranked 396th. Huayi hadn't entered the market by that time, so the private film company had earned the final seat on the list for their effort.

Qin Guan turned to the first page to check out the guys at the top. In 2005, Huang Guangyu and Ding Lei had fought over the first place. Two different family groups had taken the first and second place. It was a time for lonely heroes. The rising new industries were challenging the old families.

In two years, old industries, such as aluminium and steel, would surrender to terrible new industries, including the real estate and internet industry. They would sadly have to leave their high spots on the list.

What should I do? My way is different than theirs. Qin Guan had no idea what to do, for he had no plans of taking over the commercial industry. He suddenly looked around and smiled proudly.

Wow! I'm rich now. I can buy double portions of anything I want to eat! I can have one portion and throw the other one away!

As the overnight millionaire was about to kiss the list, a knock on the door scared him. He straightened his clothes and sat up properly. "Come in, please."

Wang entered anxiously. "Qin Guan, a disaster is about to take place! Director Lang Kun wants to talk to you!"

"Is that the general director of the previous Spring Festival Gala? What does he want?"

"It's not about a new film. He is still the director this year."

"He shouldn't have come here then. I didn't sign up for the gala. I have nothing to talk to him about."

"You were originally planning on ignoring it, but you made headlines right before the Spring Festival!"

"How? What did I do?"

"Look at this!"

Wang turned on her laptop. All the business news websites were focused on the recent Forbes lists. Qin Guan was on both lists, which had made all his fans go crazy.

Chapter 823: The Spring Festival Gala

"Our idol is a rich man!"

"Our idol is a young entrepreneur!"

"He is the youngest, most handsome guy on the list!"

"He is not just an actor."

"He is like the young, handsome CEO we read about in web novels!"

Wang Liying closed her laptop. "Your fame attracted CCTV. That's why they contacted you again."

Wang was right. Qin Guan's fortune had shocked a lot of people. Ordinary people felt confident about their future now thanks to Qin Guan's success after all his struggles. His story was so encouraging! That was why the general director felt like the gala was lacking something.

"Will Qin Guan be participating in the gala?"

"No."

"Why? Didn't you ask him to?"

"Yes, but he turned down the opportunity due to his tight schedule. I think he'll be spending the holiday with his family."

"That's what happened last year!" Director Lang Kun stuffed a videotape into the camera. It was a recording of the Lantern Festival party in Y city.

The assistant director was stupefied. "Is that Qin Guan?"

"Yes." Director Lang Kun nodded. "That's why I asked about him."

"Actually, that's beside the point. Some people are very interested in Forbes. He is the only person included in both lists, and this is the most important gala of our entire nation. As a rising star, he

should do his bit to help the cultural industry."

"I received three calls concerning Qin Guan today. The people have spoken. Some of them are really curious."

The assistant director smiled meaningfully at Lang Kun and patted his shoulder without a word.

The title "general director" might sound powerful, but it was Lang Kun that was under the most pressure. He had to coordinate everything and convince everyone. The gala would turn into a disaster if he made even the smallest mistake.

Plus, the audience was getting pickier and pickier. The gala was a tradition that had to be continued though, so all the responsibility lay on Lang Kun's shoulders. He felt like a camel struggling in the desert. Thankfully, the assistant director decided to help him strengthen his relationship with the actors.

Before Qin Guan and Wang Liying could figure out a way to deal with this, Qin Guan's assistant received a call.

Qin Guan answered it helplessly. The steady voice of a middle-aged man was heard through the phone. The assistant director was good at negotiating. A good voice was all one needed for an emotional conversation late at night.

His voice, which made people feel close to him, eased Qin Guan's worry.

"Hello, Qin Guan. I'm the assistant director of CCTV. My last name is Tan."

"Oh, hello."

"We are putting together a program that will show the unity of the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. It will follow the singing and dancing performance at the very beginning. We are currently selecting the singers. We plan on choosing an influential actor from each area. I was wondering if you would be interested in representing the mainland."

"I know that few domestic directors work during the Spring Festival, and you just returned from France and will be staying at home for a while. I hope that you will accept our invitation and spend the festival with us. Of course, directors from the Ministry of Culture, the SARFT and different TV stations will be attending the party. This will be a good chance for you to increase your popularity..."

The guy was very good at propaganda. He was like an iron hand in a velvet glove. Qin Guan relaxed at his words.

He had turned down the gala because it was too much trouble. If he participated, he would have to decide on a performance, rehearse and compete against other actors from all over the country in the CCTV Hall. The whole process would take at least two months.

If he was lucky enough to get to the next round, he still wouldn't be able to rest. Every second of the gala mattered. If they ran out of time, the performances would be cancelled immediately.

Chapter 824: The Backbone Of Underground Music

It would be a disaster for the groups and individuals participating in the event. Qin Guan was too kind to compete with them, but he had no excuse to turn down the invitation.

"Really? Great!"

When he heard his positive response, the assistant director relaxed. He had fulfilled Lang Kun's dream and completed his task. He had to nail down Qin Guan to avoid a big delay.

"I'll send the song to you later. All the details, including the music, dancers and your part, will be in the attachment. We'll also send you the list of your partners. If you have cooperated with them before, it will make things easier. If not, don't worry about it. You can get to know each other during the rehearsal."

"Okay, thanks."

When Qin Guan hung up, he suddenly realized he had been trapped. They had already discussed the final rehearsal. The guy seemed like a strict director. Should I prepare in advance?

Qin Guan asked Wang to send him the program as soon as possible. He had decided to take the invitation seriously.

Unlike Qin Guan, who had a very tight schedule, Man Wenjun's phone was silent. As a domestic pop singer, the gala would be the best chance for him to promote himself. His agent had contacted the organizing committee in advance and had been promised a spot at the event. If he was lucky enough, he might get a chance to sing in the choir or even alone.

His dream was suddenly interrupted by a call.

"Sorry, but our original choice accepted the invitation. You were just the backup plan. Should I check if there's a place for you in the

choir?"

"Can he participate in the pop song medley?" his agent asked.

"Man Wenjun has released no popular work this year. The songs have to be popular. They are meant to kill time. Half the singers could have their act cancelled at any moment. We can't add one more singer. I'll check the choir for you. I'm busy now. Bye!" he said and hung up.

A solo had turned into a place in the choir... Man Wenjun's agent hung up the phone sadly and turned around to find Man sitting on the couch silently. The plain-looking man had not graduated from a professional school. He had climbed his way up from the bottom of society.

He was famous for his voice, which was a fact that had limited his career. His appearance and few fans made his future look dim.

Before his agent could figure out a way to comfort him, the silent guy spoke up.

"The original singer changed his mind?"

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

God knew...

The honest man smiled. "I'm really curious about that guy. Could you please help me get a place in the choir? A short appearance is better than nothing. I'm afraid that people will forget about me. It's been such a long time..."

They won't. The answer choked in his agent's throat. He compromised with a long sigh.

"Okay, I'll tell them."

By then, Qin Guan had reached the place where he would be meeting Fatty Gao.

Yes, Fatty Gao was Gao Xiaosong. Actually, he was only a little plump, but his round face was extra big. The young man seemed like a tough fellow, but he was actually very easy-going. Qin Guan had maintained a long, steady friendship with him. When he had accepted CCTV's invitation, he had thought of Gao right away. Gao had replied positively.

It was the end of the year, so musicians had plenty of free time. Gao had some time to chat. As soon as Qin Guan got out of the car, Gao pulled him to a private recording studio.

Even though he was an unreliable man, Gao was strict about his music. He owned so much equipment that he could establish his own small record label. A group of weird men with long hair had become the backbone of underground music, just like the directors of the 6th generation had become the backbone of indie cinema.

Chapter 825: Gao Xiaosong Joins In

The musicians were struggling to achieve their dreams in a corner. The studio was their holy land. That day, it had welcomed a very special person. He was an outsider of the music circle, but a f*cking award-winning indie actor.

They all gathered in the studio curiously. Gao read the program of the gala. He went mad when he saw Qin Guan's song.

"You'll sing this song during the gala?"

"Yes."

"Are you kidding me? Is that 'Book of Family Names'?"

"Yes. At least that's what they told me. If you don't understand, I have numbered the musical notes here."

"This is an insult! Even a nursery rhyme would be better. Neither has a beat, or any ups and downs. This is for stars from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan? What the hell..."

Underground musicians worshipped rock and folk music. The song in Gao's hands was really terrible, but the mainstream tune had been created especially for the Spring Festival Gala. The audience would be common people.

I came here to learn from you, I'm not asking you to cover the song!

Gao Xiaosong cursed his way out of the studio. Then he put on his earphones to listen to Qin Guan.

"Heaven, Earth, dignified and imposing Chinese hearts

The state of China has a long history

My family name is Li, and yours is Zhang

Huanghe River and Yangtze River are flowing in our blood..."

Qin Guan sang seriously inside as the audience outside laughed

loudly. The solemn mainstream lyrics were like a square peg in a round hole there. They sounded really weird.

Plenty of people rushed there to watch the funny recording, including Wang Feng, Pu Shu and other famous singers.

Gao laughed so hard that he had to lie down on the couch. Wang Feng, who was a kinder man, tried to remain neutral.

"CCTV is good at selecting singers. None of us could sing this song well. It's only suitable for a handsome guy like him."

Gao couldn't stand to watch the shameless man. He suddenly spat at Wang's feet. You! Save some dignity for us rockers!

By the time they turned their attention to Qin Guan again, he had finished the song.

"You have to memorize the lyrics. Try not to be out of tune! Is it a live show?"

Qin Guan nodded.

"Is your performance followed by a big dance performance?"

Qin Guan nodded again.

"You just need to be more handsome than your partners. All the cameras will be on you. The song is not important."

Qin Guan tried to picture the scene in his mind, so he had a general idea about the large-scale gala. The cameras would concentrate on the most famous person, which made him less nervous.

His extraordinary memory would work well in that occasion. He just had to focus on the tune of the song. These professional singers didn't scold me. It seems that my singing is pretty good.

He walked out of the studio and chatted a little with the singers. He was a rich man on the Forbes list, so those poor guys worshipped him.

Qin Guan made vigorous efforts to talk about piracy, which was getting more and more rampant, but Gao was a smart guy, so he focused on singers instead of on companies.

If one wanted to promote a singer, they could invest in them, release their records, organize concerts and so on. The sponsors could see the potential of the capital. Thanks to Qin Guan's help, more and more singers would avoid trouble and present better music to the masses.

Qin Guan wanted to experience this win-win situation first hand. The musical department of his firm would welcome fresh blood.

The small firm, which had started out with just Qin Guan and Huang Bo, now monopolised 67% of the domestic modelling resources. His decision that day would earn the firm the title "Musician Scout" in the future.

Let's leave that part for later though. Qin Guan said goodbye to Gao Xiaosong and the other singers, unaware of their choked laughter, and headed to the grand hall of CCTV.

At the time, it had still been located on Fuxingmen Street. The parking lot was really crowded due to the rehearsal.

A group of beautiful girls got off a bus with the logo "Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe". The dancers looked like flowers in the winter. Qin Guan's car was stuck among them.

Chapter 826: A Group Of Comedians

They were all walking by his car. If he opened the door that moment, all the girls would turn their attention to him.

Wang was really regretting not covering the new car's windows. The transparent glass revealed everything.

When the girls left the parking lot, Wang opened the door silently. When she saw that everything was alright, Qin Guan got out of the car like a thief.

He closed the door and then turned around in fear. There were countless actors getting out of their cars around them and craning their necks to peer at him.

They were all trapped inside their cars. There was also a group of famous comedians, including Feng Gong, Cai Ming, Niu Qun and Gong Hanlin.

They were all experienced actors who would be performing at the gala. Qin Guan felt like a square peg in a round hole.

"Wow! That young man is so handsome! Has he been hired for the gala? Who is he?"

"No idea. He is wearing sunglasses, so maybe he's from Hong Kong or Taiwan."

"No, the CCTV staff would have picked him up at the airport. This young man drove here."

His name was popular in the entertainment circle, but the national system was different from the indie cinema industry. In their eyes, Qin Guan was just a young actor.

What should an honest young actor do when he met actors like them?

"Nice to meet you, Teacher Feng! I grew up watching your work!"

"Wow, you are so beautiful, Teacher Cai Ming! May I call you

sister?"

"No, no! I'm not qualified to call you Brother Huang. You are Teacher Huang to me!"

A young man had to be humble and honest with older actors, so Qin Guan tried his best to impress them.

The gala staff led them to different areas.

"Actors performing short plays, cross talks and operas, please follow me to Area C."

"Singers, this way, please. You are in Area D."

Along the long, winding corridor were fitting rooms, lounges, and waiting areas for different people. Dancers were lining up for makeup, and figurants were waiting for their turn. Qin Guan and the group attracted everyone's attention.

"Wow! That's Feng Gong and Niu Qun!"

"I know them! My mom loves their performances!"

"Who is that guy? The one wearing sunglasses! He looks so funny!"

Qin Guan took off his sunglasses awkwardly.

"Ah!" All the senior actors looked scared.

"It's Qin Guan! I love his films!"

Are you sure? Very few of Qin Guan's films have been released in China. You can't have watched them. You just like his looks, don't you?

The sad older artists turned left, and Qin Guan turned right. He pushed the door open and entered the makeup room. The two people already inside turned in his direction.

"How are you? You must be Qin Guan!"

"How are you?"

It was Yu Chengqing from Taiwan and Xie Tingfeng from Hong Kong, both of whom were big shots. That explained why CCTV had invited Qin Guan to the gala.

Judging by their heights, Qin Guan knew that he would be standing in the middle on the stage. He would act as a Chinese mascot during the performance. The audience would pay attention to their looks instead of their singing ability.

Qin Guan held his hand out towards his partners. "Hello, I'm Qin Guan. Nice to meet you."

"Likewise. Go to the stylist first. Our act will be among the best. We'll have some time to chat after the rehearsal."

"Thank you."

Work came first and socializing second. Qin Guan rushed into the fitting room.

Chapter 827: The Second Rehearsal

Their costumes were made by CCTV. Although he had high standards, Qin Guan didn't find anything wrong with his costume. The black traditional Chinese garment and red scarf were his favorite things in the entire Spring Festival.

Harlem Yu fixed his eyes on him as Qin Guan went out of the fitting room. He chatted with Qin Guan as the stylist was working on him.

"During the Golden Horse Festival, I wanted to tell you that few people could look as good as Andy Lau when standing next to him. If I was not backstage, I would have come to introduce myself. You four impressed me a lot."

Nicolas Tse remained silent. He was not good at talking to strangers. He just looked at Qin Guan with envy. All the aspiring actors in Hong Kong considered Tony Leung, Chiu Wai and Andy Lau their idols. The young man, who had relied on his father's fame as well as his own ability to make headlines, was currently in a dilemma.

As a real award-winning actor the same age as him sat beside him, the proud young man fell silent.

The professional stylist was really good at his job. He finished as soon as possible, gave Wang his number, and left the private fitting room to go help his colleagues.

Although this was only a rehearsal, some makeup was still necessary.

The three men began chatting. Yu was actually a really funny guy. Although he was 20 years older than Qin Guan, he was a lot like a young man. The man was a real chatterbox. Before the other guys could get annoyed to death, an assistant walked in.

"The singing and dancing performance will end in 32 seconds.

The actors of the next act should get to the entrance. When you hear the announcement, you can get on the stage through entrance No.1 and entrance No.3. Is everything clear?"

The three men nodded and fixed their eyes on the indicator lights. When they turned green, they would need to get on the stage through the different entrances.

The dancers were already in position. When the prelude came, they began performing.

The actors had to control the atmosphere. They couldn't seem too weak compared to the dancers around them or too powerful compared to the girl sword-fighting behind them.

The dancers filled the stage, creating a commotion. The girl had to be very well-connected. The innocuous method of stuffing actors into galas was prevailing in China. The bigger the gala was, the more frequent that phenomenon was.

The audience might feel strange about some nondescript dancers or acrobats in the background, but those actors were included in the gala to comfort some relative cultural industry or unlucky competitor.

They all just had to have a good time together.

The three men ignored the sword-fighting girl completely. They just followed the cameras solemnly and paid close attention to each other. They finished their performance smoothly. Thanks to the girl, who was holding a cool sword behind their backs, they had to be serious about their job.

After they repeated the song three times, the assistant director stopped them. Then the director and the members of the organizing committee voted by raising their hands. They had passed the second rehearsal.

"Cut!"

The three men shrugged. By that time, the girl had picked up her

sword and was standing next to them for the curtain call. She glanced at them with a proud expression in her eyes and then walked out first.

The three men, who felt uncertain about her, started talking as they walked. "Who is she?"

"No idea. Yu and I are not from here."

They acted all innocent and cute as they waited for Qin Guan's answer.

Wang Liying took out her notebook immediately and explained. She had done her homework.

"She is Li Fei from Macau. Although it's a tiny place, it's still a part of the gala. She is the most popular actor in Macao. She was born in Guanxi and she is a national martial arts champion. The director asked her to play to her strengths. You shouldn't expect an athlete to sing with a professional actor and singer after all."

The girl just had good connections. That explained why she was so confident.

Chapter 828: Internal Fans

Before they could accept the news, they were shocked by the surrounding crowd. They had finished their performance first, so many actors were waiting for their turn. They had nothing to do anytime soon, so they could do anything they liked.

The smart figurants took this chance to walk around. They took out everything they could find-marker pens, lipsticks, T-shirts, bags, etc-and asked for autographs. Their eyes were filled with hope.

"Qin Guan, I'm a fan of yours. Could you please sign here for me?"

"Harlem Yu, I'm such a big fan..."

They walked up to them in turns so they wouldn't block the other actors' way to the stage.

Qin Guan felt tender as he watched the scene. He put his arms around Yu and Xie's shoulders. "Don't you have anything else to do? This is our first meeting, so we have to get to know each other. It'll be really helpful for our cooperation."

Tse and Yu nodded helplessly. "It's no big deal. The fans are really nice. We could turn this into a signing session."

The two men were members of the entertainment circle, so they were really smart. They knew that Qin Guan was delaying them to help the fans.

Qin Guan pointed to their lounge. "We have to remove our makeup first. Then we'll be in that room. If you want an autograph, send a representative with all the things you want signed."

"Okay! Thank you so much!"

The men chatted happily in the room as a representative of the

fans collected items from the crowd. The fans felt really happy that their idols were so close to them.

When the girl knocked on the door with all the items, she almost burst into tears.

She liked Qin Guan for his looks, acting skills and pure love, so she took one more look at her idol.

The three men in the lounge got to work. This simple job was of great significance for their fans.

When Qin Guan picked up the last piece of paper, the girl said in a low voice, biting on her lips, "Could you please write one more sentence?"

"What would you like?"

"To the rising stars of the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe: Zhong Lingyan and Zhong Yanling."

"It's addressed to two individuals?"

"Yes, we are twins. My sister likes Nicolas Tse and I like you."

Before her voice could fade away, another small head appeared around the door. The two girls looked identical, but their different costumes implied that they performed different dances.

Their two identical faces confused everyone.

Zhong Yanling pointed to herself. "I'm the oldest one. I like Qin Guan." Then she pointed to the other girl. "This is my sister. She likes Nicolas Tse."

Yu sighed. It's so wonderful to be young. If they were triplets, maybe one of them would have liked me. Before he could start feeling sorry for himself, the second girl took another piece of paper out of her pocket.

"I, I also like Qin Guan. I wanted to ask him for an autograph personally."

Her older sister looked really surprised. "Why didn't you tell me before? Actually, I have already included your name."

The shy girl looked really cute. "Sorry, but you were so fond of him... I didn't want to compete against you..."

Yu burst into laughter as he signed with trembling hands. Tse nearly got angry. My friends in Hong Kong have always said that Qin Guan was poisonous. It seems like it's true.

Qin Guan signed once more for them. The two girls flew away with all the items under Tse's terrifying gaze.

Chapter 829: Night Snack

Bang! As soon as the door was closed, Tse grabbed Qin Guan. They had already gotten to know each other.

"Are these your friends who came to make fun of us?"

"Yes, is there a camera in here? I was just in my shorts!"

You think too much, Uncle Yu. This kind of thing is not popular in China.

As the host, Qin Guan decided to treat them to dinner to compensate for the incident. The two men were heartbroken after all. The three of them let the staff know and left CCTV early. Wang had already told the China Club to prepare Qin Guan's yard. Even the pastry cook had gotten to work.

As soon as they saw the ancient gate, the two men from Hong Kong and Taiwan forgot about the annoying traffic jam they had suffered through on the way there. This was a really quiet place downtown. One could even feel the warmth of the hanging lanterns swaying in the piercing winter wind.

The manager in charge of Qin Guan's yard was waiting for them at the reception. He asked the waiter to lead the guests to the yard, which became their working site that night.

When they reached the yard, even Yu fell silent before its unique charm. On every corner of the grey wall were engraved patterns that added elegance to the traditional yard and winding path.

The plants were withered in the winter, but they still gave off no sense of decadence. The green potted plants spiced up the monotonous view. There was also a maid holding a lantern at every corner. It was definitely a very interesting trip.

Oil lamps lit up one after the other as they walked past them. The men felt like they were inside a scroll painting. Even Tse gave Qin Guan a thumbs-up.

When they finally entered the yard and took their seats in the bright living room, they let out a sigh of relief. They had never been to such a vintage club. The men were really careful with what they said and did and fixed their eyes on Qin Guan, so that they wouldn't make a mistake.

When all the maids left, they suddenly relaxed. Yu stood up to look at the furniture as he chatted with Qin Guan.

"Wow! This is really good! It must be hard to get a membership here. Plus, the fees must be terribly high."

"Yes, they are."

Qin Guan didn't deny it. He only dropped by for business negotiations, but the contacts and resources of the club were certainly worth the fees. That was no secret.

Yu changed the topic. "Why did you bring us here? It must be a special occasion. I like this place. It's private and elegant. It's a good place for a party! If the food is delicious too, I'll visit you the next time I come to the mainland."

"You are welcome to. The yard is open all day long. As for the food... Wait and see!"

They turned around and saw the waiters approaching quietly with several trays. They served them four dishes and a pot of tea.

There were different kinds of night snacks in China. Tired singers chose delicate desserts instead of cigarettes, wine and greasy food.

First, four kinds of dry and glazed fruit were served, including pine nuts, cashew nuts, peanuts and pistachios. The club's specialty was glazed fruit. There were green plums, orange pancakes, longan pulp and gourd with sugar icing. It was a feast for the eyes.

Rice dumplings, white pastries, cream puffs and bean paste followed. The food was made in accordance with the traditional ways of the imperial palace.

Yu did not seem that interested in the desserts. He looked at the food hesitantly. Qin Guan could guess what he was thinking about.

"Don't worry, I didn't order much tonight. I just wanted to show you a variety of tastes."

Two girls set two more big trays down on the table.

"Here are the main dishes, Mr. Qin. Would you like your staple food served now?"

"Yes."

"Okay. All your food has been served. Please ring the bell if you need anything."

"Okay, thanks."

The girls walked out slowly with calculated movements. The service there was also pretty good.

Yu grinned at the new dishes, which included pine nuts, chicken jelly powder, cherry meat, Buddhist meat, shredded radish, as well as beef mutton tendons.

He was a carnivorous man.

When the Chinese baked rolls with minced meat were served, even Tse, who was a quiet man, couldn't control himself.

They were crisp baked rolls with a delicious meat filling. When one bit on a roll, the sesame on the crust fell like raindrops. The combination of meat and flour was wonderful. The three men ate all the rolls as fast as lightning.

Then they burst into laughter.

Qin Guan made two more friends during that meal. The long-term happiness and luck brought by the food lasted until the day of the gala.

According to CCTV tradition, the news about the gala would be released one month before it took place. The most concerning issue

for the public were the famous actors that would be participating.

Chapter 830: Happy Spring Festival!

There were no new faces performing traditional opera, cross talk or short plays, so everyone concentrated on their idols.

When the fans saw the latest update on Qin Guan's blog, they fell into a sea of joy.

"Good news! Qin Guan has been invited to the gala!"

"What road will he take in the future? Will he choose being an actor or a CEO?"

"I don't want to see Qin Guan turn into a middle-aged man with a bald head and a large stomach. He should remain handsome forever."

"Yes! He should focus on the entertainment and fashion circle."

"Yes! Qin Guan is ours!"

Qin Guan's presence at the gala seemed to be a big stimulant for his fans, who weren't worried at all about the Forbes list.

In America, Qin Guan's fans paid a visit to the nearest Chinatown to watch the gala on TV and have fun with other Chinese fans.

Some clever American fans even planned on infiltrating Chinese groups to get first-hand information. In Southeastern Asian countries, people rejected the galas of their own countries to watch Qin Guan. Some TV stations even had to transmit the CCTV gala.

As a result, invitations to the gala became really popular. Younger people were eager to get one so they could see their idols. The stars from Hong Kong and Taiwan also had a large fan club on the Chinese mainland.

This caused the price of the invitations to skyrocket. Some people sold theirs online for as much as 10,000 yuan!

"I need an invitation! I'll pay any price!"

"I just want to enter the hall! Please call 137689797234..."

"I thought you lived in the Guandong Province..."

"I'll stay in the capital overnight!"

People gave up the chance to stay with their families for the hope to see their idols in person.

Unfortunately, very few of them could realize their dream. Anyone who had an invitation hid it, as if it was treasure.

On New Year's Eve, fireworks started exploding as dumplings were being boiled in pots at every home. Soon, all Chinese people began to enjoy a feast.

Time passed quickly as everyone ate and drank. When it was eight o' clock, the Spring Festival Gala of 2006 opened in a grand way.

The ceremony did not include any traditional settings or props. Everything was shown on LED screens. This was an initiative of the organizing committee, who wanted the traditional gala to catch up with the pace of the times.

The content was still traditional though. The audience could guess the sequence of the performances, which made them a little disappointed.

"The first performance always involves singing and dancing. It's so boring!"

"Take it easy. Qin Guan's act is coming up!"

People were refreshing the message board online. Most young people were stuck before their computers, as they were way more convenient to use than TV.

Li Yong and Zhu Jun, who were the two hosts, went off the stage. Qin Guan's fans backstage, including the twins, were shouting, "Cheers, Qin Guan!"

Qin Guan got on the stage. When he glanced at the crowd, he

calmed down. His initial nervousness dispersed like smoke. The bigger the audience, the more excited he got.

Qin Guan took the lead among the three men. After they sang two sentences each, they would reach the chorus. They had rehearsed too much to make any mistakes.

The audience was shocked though. What the hell is this?

The three fashionable men were totally absorbed in the song. There was a solemn expression on their faces as they performed.

What's that woman doing there? Is she trying to kill one of them?

The young fans were speechless, but their parents and grandparents were really interested in the performance.

"Is this a folk song or a pop song?"

"A pop one, probably. I like it!" They were really impressed by the performance.

"It's so warm and sweet... We are all the same big family. I'm looking forward to Taiwan's return!"

The young fans were used to the comments of the previous generation.

"The one in the middle is the most handsome..."

"Yes! Yes! That's my idol, grandma. His name is Qin Guan. Listen..."

Older and younger people took advantage of the situation to discuss the same topic. The generation gap narrowed a little this way.

Chapter 831: Absent From The Award Ceremony

It was easy to get close to others. If people were more considerate and tolerant, they would feel the silent love of their family.

The bells rang at midnight as the new year greeted everyone.

The noise of the fireworks slowly came to an end, but people kept a light on overnight. This way, the people returning late at night could find their destination easily.

At the end of the gala, all the actors got on the stage for the curtain call. It was already about 1:00 a.m. As "A Memorable Night", which was a very familiar song for Chinese people, started playing, Qin Guan finished his New Year's Eve with his temporary colleagues.

A warm call soothed his exhaustion. It was Cong Nianwei, who had returned to Y city instead of him.

"Happy Spring Festival!"

"Happy Spring Festival! Are our parents okay? Come back soon. I miss you!"

Your smell has faded from the sheets. I can't sleep well without you.

Cong Nianwei had to stay with her parents though, so she didn't return to the capital until the CCTV drama began. Qin Guan had already started his new job by that time.

As soon as the Spring Festival was over, he began preparing for "Crazy Stone". This was his first investment in a film as both an actor and a producer, so there was a lot that he had to do personally.

For example, he had to organize a group of photographers and employ experienced prop masters and other professionals. Some of

these jobs could be entrusted to an assistant, but others had to be done by Qin Guan himself.

However, Ning Hao had no outstanding work in China and Qin Guan was a greenhand at being a producer.

As a result, making progress took a long time. Fortunately, before they could get desperate, something amazing happened.

The film "Charlie And The Chocolate Factory", which was in theaters in America, had been nominated by the Golden Globes and the Oscars committee, just as "Closer" had one year ago. Both films had famous directors, good actors and lots of fans.

However, this producer was more ambitious than the one who had invested in "Closer". He had broken into the adult world with a children's movie.

Good news and bad news always came in pairs though. Qin Guan had been nominated for a Golden Globe, but not for an Oscar.

Things were much worse this time. He hadn't even been short-listed for an Oscar. The movie had only been nominated for its cinematography, music and directing.

Qin Guan was not optimistic about winning the Golden Globe either. Using the CCTV party as an excuse, he turned down the invitation of the organizing committee.

The director and producer didn't attach any importance to the invitation either. They didn't care about promoting the main actor of a children's movie. If the past winner returned with empty hands, it would be a huge embarrassment.

Thus, neither the crew nor Qin Guan attended the award ceremony. Instead, Qin Guan asked Qu Xuemei to attend it on his behalf.

Coincidentally, Qin Guan happened to win the award.

When the host announced the result, both Qin Guan's

competitors and the members of the crew were shocked.

Qu Xuemei got on the stage with Qin Guan's name tag and made an unprecedently short speech.

"I would like to express Qin Guan's gratitude to all of you on his behalf," she said before bowing in front of the audience and leaving.

Everyone remained stupefied until the end of the ceremony. The reporters were practically beating their own chests.

The f*cking organizing committee hadn't leaked any information earlier, so they had not been prepared to record the few seconds Qu had spent on the stage. They had let these striking news slip between their fingers.

The Chinese reporters stationed abroad were caught off guard as well. They had thought that they would only be watching the ceremony. No one had expected Qin Guan to be such a powerful actor.

These news, as well as CCTV's big drama show, made Qin Guan suddenly very popular.

"Emperor Han Wu" swept the country. The audience ratings took the lead not just at CCTV, but at other provincial stations as well. This prevented the Mango Station from rising rapidly. CCTV had won the race!

Qin Guan and the new TV series completed each other.

Chapter 832: Unfair

The popularity of the TV series and Qin Guan's international influence inspired Asian traders, who always invested in domestic TV shows.

Japan was the largest market for Chinese historical TV series. The Japanese showed a special preference to detail and grand settings. South Korea, who was a loyal follower of Japan, also paid great attention to the series. In one week, the distribution rights had been purchased by both countries.

Provincial TV stations and advertisers were also approaching CCTV in great numbers. In a few days, the TV series had made CCTV a big fortune. The advertising director grinned from ear to ear even while he was asleep. The overwhelming news about Qin Guan's new award were terrific.

Awards usually didn't mean much, but the Golden Globes and the Oscars took place during the same period, and the former were called Academy Awards.

If the Golden Globe winner was recognized by other professionals though, then why wasn't he nominated for an Oscar?

An Oscar was an award based on commercial value, promotion and popularity, and the selection was much more complicated than it was for other awards, which made data-analysts feel like throwing a pile of statistical forms at the Oscar judges.

The box office of "Charlie And The Chocolate Factory" in North America had reached 124.3 million dollars, and 26 countries had bought the film's distribution rights, China included. The movie's international box office had surpassed its gross in North America, reaching 1,500 million dollars.

Considering that the film's budget had only been 23 million, the film was doing fantastic. Not a single film on the Oscars short list

would dare compete against it.

Actually, Li An, who was the director of "Brokeback Mountain", had won the Best Director Oscar. It was rare to see a Chinese man win an Oscar. Meanwhile, Zhang Ziyi's "Memoirs Of A Geisha" had captivated audiences with its exotic charm.

However, the fact that there were too many Chinese people at the awards didn't mean that Qin Guan should be snubbed. The organizers had just tried to avoid holding a Chinese-only Oscars ceremony in 2006.

Where was the fairness in that though?

Some radical Americans would argue that Qin Guan would not necessarily win the award, even if he was nominated, but the issue was that he had lost a fair chance in spite of his outstanding acting skills.

Another possibility was that the organizing committee was afraid of the actor. Given the chance, the Chinese media and agencies, Dreamworks, Columbia, as well as his fans, would become a powerful army that would stand behind him.

Thus, Qin Guan didn't show up on the stage. This interesting incident would remain popular for a while.

There was no fairness in the future either though. George Clooney was the winner that year. Qin Guan's fans felt better. If the winner had been a nobody, or one of the protagonists of "Brokeback Mountain", they would have faced a storm.

This gossip was enough for Qin Guan. Some experienced actors finally accepted the film after some hesitation. They actually didn't try to promote the film due to its limited budget, which was a rare case in the film circle.

The dark comedy with its absurd style did not follow mainstream directing methods. Qin Guan's participation had ensured the approval of experienced actors though.

An award-winning actor with a high international box office was a good example for them after all. They would also be able to use him as an excuse if the film failed.

Qin Guan took advantage of the situation to disappear, despite his fixed schedule. Sister Xue had to call the crews of "If, Love" and "Letter From An Unknown Woman" to apologize and postpone Qin Guan's scenes.

She had no idea about the deadline of the film in which Qin Guan had invested. Everyone was wondering if Qin Guan would have time to attend the Hong Kong Film Awards, the Tokyo Film Festival and the San Sebastian International Film Festival in Spain.

Considering his few, but extraordinary films the previous year, it would be easy for Qin Guan to be selected by a festival. People always tolerated lucky men. Thus, the directors of the two films came to terms with the result. They could wait until Qin Guan was done with "Crazy Stone".

Chapter 833: The Crew

Qin Guan didn't even need to participate in the promotional activities. All he had to do was attend the award ceremony and share his luck with everyone else. Sister Xue, who was a cunning woman, promised that he would.

Qin Guan, who had no idea about this, had just reached Chongqing with Ning Hao. They had originally had three alternatives for a shooting location, but as soon as they arrived in Chongqing, they decided it was the exact place they wanted.

The booming metropolis had been experiencing rapid growth and uncertainty. It was just like the film, whose limitless foreshadowing and coincidences would intersect in a three-dimensional space to form clues that twisted and wended into a story.

Qin Guan had hired a photographer from China Film Group, and the actors involved were all tough. Even Xu Zheng, who portrayed the villain, was an elegant man.

They made a group booking at a small hotel, all meals included. Qin Guan's investment covered the cost, so the money-grubber was eager to finish the film as soon as possible.

The crew did its best while they were in the city.

They shot three different scenes in an alley that extended in all directions. Director Ning stood in the dead zone as three actors and three cameramen worked separately.

After filming each scene, Ning Hao would watch the playback. There were no big problems, so they just kept filming.

The alley was crowded, and all the actors looked like heroes.

Standing at the entrance of the alley, Huang Bo and Liu Hua portrayed two movers that were actually thieves. Wang Xun, who was the secretary of a real estate company, was standing in the

middle. At the end of the alley was Guo Tao, who portrayed the director of an arts & crafts factory.

The three groups of people, who were seemingly unconnected to each other, had been led to the same alley by destiny.

The funny, fast-paced action confused the figurants, who couldn't understand the plot.

Due to the shooting location, the director had asked all the actors to talk with a local accent. It was a funny way of expressing oneself. This was easy for Liu Hua and Guo Tao, who were professional actors that had graduated from the Central Drama Academy in Beijing.

Qin Guan though, who was portraying a rich businessman from Hong Kong, had to look like a professional, proud, confident thief. Thus, the King made his presence known in his luxurious hotel.

The crew had rented a fitting room at a hotel. Qin Guan was wearing a business suit and a shirt, which was his usual style. The only difference was the thick golden chain around his neck and the shining diamond rings on his fingers.

Wang Xun, who was Xu Zheng's sidekick, had hired the best, most professional thief in the circle to make the arts & crafts factory go bankrupt.

The cameraman followed Qin Guan's movements.

Wang Xun, who was pretending to be thinking deeply, gazed at Qin Guan. "Let's just cut to the chase. How much?"

Qin Guan took the cigarette from Wang's mouth and threw it into a glass.

"100,000 dollars."

"Do you need a room?"

"All I need is a car."

His diamond ear studs were sparkling in the lens. His face looked

cool and solemn. He thought very highly of his profession.

"Cut!"

The frame lingered on his face for two seconds. Qin Guan's first scene in the film was over. An average actor could film a 30-second scene in one take. People didn't think too much of it, yet they made fun of Qin Guan's nice costume.

Huang Bo and Liu Hua were dressed like rural laborers, while Guo Tao looked like a security guard. Qin Guan looked like a god among mortals.

"Wow, Da Qin. I like your sparkling ear studs. Do they hurt?"

"Tiffany made clips especially for me. I didn't have to pierce my ears."

"Your suit must have cost a lot. This fabric has been very popular this year."

"Armani is a sponsor of the film, so he gave it to me for free."

Everyone gathered around Qin Guan and started hitting him. After venting their anger, they turned to Director Ning, who had been hiding in a corner.

"Director, we are finished. When shall we resume filming?"

"Immediately! Attention, please! The local thieves will be competing against an international top thief!"

It was a battle among professionals. The mighty dragon was no match for the native serpents though. As soon as Qin Guan reached Chongqing, his luggage was stolen by three local thieves.

Chapter 834: A Renowned Thief Vs. A Nobody

The arrogant man deserved that. He had walked out of the exit as if he was on a runway. His nice suit, silver suitcase and beautiful wind coat shocked the audience.

What a handsome rich guy!

However, a beautiful beginning did not always lead to a happy ending. Qin Guan took his sunglasses off and waved at a cab with a faint smile.

Meanwhile, his Chongqing competitors took action. Huang Bo stood on his tiptoes and covered Qin Guan's eyes.

"Guess who I am!" he shouted with a Qingdao accent. "You get three guesses!"

A dagger slid down Qin Guan's sleeve towards his hand. He was confident about his skills.

"You must have mistaken me for someone else," Qin Guan answered calmly.

"Wrong! Two guesses left!" Huang Bo grinned from ear to ear behind Qin Guan.

"Let me go, sir. Please."

"Okay, keep your eyes closed." Huang Bo ran away as fast as he could.

Confused, Qin Guan turned around, only to realize that his case and the cab were gone. Nobody was around anymore. The professional thief from Hong Kong had been defeated by his local peers.

He had lost the first round.

After the shooting, everyone began discussing the script and

laughing.

Would an internationally renowned thief be defeated in China?

Are Chinese men really that clever?

They weren't able to reach an agreement before the next scene.

The three local thieves discovered the equipment in Qin Guan's case and his reason for coming to Chongqing. He was planning on stealing jewellery worth eight million yuan. The jewellery was guarded by a group of security guards at a temple not far away.

These security guards were not like museum guards. If they succeeded at their job, they would be able to lead a happy life from then on, so they guarded the jewellery like dogs.

The second round suddenly began.

Huang Bo had stolen and put on Qin Guan's night clothes, so Qin Guan had to buy new ones in Chongqing.

The two thieves showed up at the temple in similar clothing. As a lone ranger, Qin Guan had gone there to scout the security measures, including the power switch.

Holding a pocket flashlight in his mouth, Qin Guan opened the door of the electricity box to study the lines. He wanted to turn off the alarm. As he was focused on this task, three local men appeared.

Liu Hua, who was their leader, saw Qin Guan next to the box. He mistook Qin Guan for Huang Bo because of their similar clothes. Angry at the man, he smacked Qin Guan's head.

"What are you doing here? You are supposed to be inside the temple!"

Ning Hao filmed an extreme close-up of Qin Guan's eyes. The famous thief looked confused as he stared at the angry man in fear.

The man's next words shocked him. "You should have stayed inside, idiot! Stop idling around! The police will be here soon!"

Then he slapped Qin Guan on the head again. Qin Guan came back to his senses and ran away as fast as he could.

He had lost the second round.

"Cut!"

"Ha ha! That was so funny!"

"I'm so tired. Let's go have a snack!"

The cast and crew fled in every direction.

Huang Bo and the other actors wanted to experience the night life in Chongqing. The residents liked going to night markets, chatting, eating and playing mahjong. Qin Guan turned down the invitation though. He was pulled back to the hotel by Ning Hao. The two of them had to discuss some details concerning the film.

As the producer of the film, Qin Guan had a lot of work to do. Huang Bo waved a kebab at him from afar, but Qin Guan ignored him.

He had to pay attention to every penny. Ning Hao had spent all his money halfway through production. From then on, Qin Guan would have to be very careful with the expenses.

As a result, every scene that saved money cheered him up.

The next day, everyone gathered around the simple temple, where thieves from all directions would try to steal the jewellery again.

The prop team was working inside. They would be hanging Qin Guan in the air with a strong wire. As he hung from the ceiling, Qin Guan would try to reach the jewellery case.

"Let's shoot the robbery scene. Is everyone ready? Three, two, camera!"

Qin Guan descended slowly from the ceiling. As he hung in the air, he turned his body toward the safe. It seemed like a simple movement, but few people knew that the wire was hard to handle

due to one's weight, the uncontrollable swaying and the wind. This required skill and strength.

Fortunately, Qin Guan had experience, so the difficult scene was finished smoothly.

Chapter 835: No Body Double

Qin Guan unlocked the safe, opened it and stretched his hand out to grab the treasure. His outstanding skills were beautiful to watch, but something went wrong during the last step of the plan. His smart hands, which were dressed in black gloves, paused 10 centimeters away from the jewellery.

He tried his best to extend his arms, but it was in vain. It turned out that his extraordinary skill, clear mind and nimble body could not beat the unscrupulous merchants of Chongqing.

All his equipment had been stolen, so he'd had to repurchase everything at a wholesale market in Chongqing, the wire around his body included. The merchant had told him that it was a full 10 meters, but it was actually shorter.

The thrifty merchant had sold him a 9.90-meter rope. Those missing 10 centimeters were the final distance between him and the jewellery.

What a tragedy!

"F*cking scammer!" Qin Guan still managed to get the jewellery out. Just when he thought that everything would be okay though, one of the local thieves arrived.

He grabbed Qin Guan's jewellery rudely and took off his mask to reveal his face.

"Alas! It's you again! Too bad that the stone is mine!"

He waved the jewellery proudly at Qin Guan, who was still hanging in the air.

Qin Guan was furious. Those small-town thieves had insulted him too many times! "Give it back to me!" he roared.

This was not a good idea. A man hanging in the air was weaker compared to one standing on the ground.

Ning Hao and the other actors, who were all smoking by the camera, smiled and laughed. Qin Guan was a cruel boss. He forced them to work overtime every day and set very high standards for their performances.

This was their payback. They wanted to see their boss go through this miserable experience. That scene was so funny!

The thief hit Qin Guan on the forehead and pushed him away. Qin Guan couldn't help but turn around in the air. His enemy also used psychological attacks.

"Wow! You are Spiderman!"

The man pushed Qin Guan again. Qin Guan formed a perfect circle with his body as he spun in the air. The small camera fixed on the rope filmed the scene from his point of view.

"Ha ha!" Huang Bo was the first to burst into laughter.

"I'm fainting! What about you, Qin Guan?"

Everyone burst into laughter, except for Qin Guan himself. Before the thief escaped, he triggered the alarm system, leaving Qin Guan to be caught by the security guards.

The director zoomed in on Qin Guan again as he climbed up the roof. Ning Hao had originally intended to use a body double for that part, but the body double's figure did not resemble Qin Guan's. A part of the audience would be Qin Guan's fans, so they would notice every detail right away. They were experts when it came to research.

Take "Emperor Han Wu" for example. Qin Guan's fans had recorded his screen time, different costumes and lines in each episode. Those were the most popular posts on the forum. Thus, after a discussion with Ning Hao, Qin Guan had decided to film the action scene himself.

He had practised a lot that day. He had climbed walls while the others had been resting, so now it was finally time for him to show

his abilities!

Chapter 836: Losing All Four Rounds

Qin Guan didn't disappoint them. He unfastened two buttons and stomped on the middle of the rope. Using that as leverage, he climbed up to the roof beam like a panda.

Meanwhile, a group of security guards rushed into the empty temple. Qin Guan had already disappeared through the ventilation system and reached the roof.

The internationally renowned robber had lost the third round.

Ning Hao, who was really satisfied, congratulated the actors one after the other happily. Everyone was busy preparing for the next scene, so they were ignoring Wang Liying.

"Director Ning, Liu Hua, Guo Tao... Can someone get Qin Guan free?"

She was right. Qin Guan was still hanging from the beam.

Everyone left like the tide, leaving Qin Guan and the anxious girl behind. Before Wang could cry for help, everyone returned, laughing and making faces at Qin Guan.

"Ha ha! Were you afraid of being abandoned?"

"Were you scared?"

I don't like the childish way you are making fun of me.

Qin Guan's good temper made him a good mediator, so he helped the whole crew work harmoniously. When Qin Guan was helped down from the beam, he began chasing and hitting everyone. Loud laughter echoed in the air.

The film was coming to an end. Liu Hua finished his scenes first. Qin Guan rewarded him with a large bonus. This was a common gesture in the circle. The actor, whose character died in the film, would receive a large sum to drive the bad luck away, despite the fact that it was only a fictional death.

This was the charm of traditional Chinese culture. One couldn't expect this in America.

Liu Hua received a bonus as well, but he stayed with the crew. He wanted to see the other characters' deaths. He was confident that they would die as well.

Ning Hao didn't disappoint him. The fate of the other guys was much worse.

Qin Guan was standing among the crowd downtown with a dirty face, torn clothes and several wounds on his body. He looked really poor under the sunshine.

He called Wang Xun confidently.

"There has been a small accident, but things are still under control."

He was confident about his professional skills, despite the fact that Wang had given up and left.

After his request was declined, Qin Guan stood on the bustling street, feeling lonely and miserable.

Everyone was trying to suppress their laughter as Huang Bo opened the lid of the sewer slowly from the inside. He had been struggling the entire night, so he was exhausted.

Qin Guan watched Huang silently. The man, who was equipped with his own tools, got out of the sewer torpidly, leaving him at a loss. It was such a funny sight.

Qin Guan had lost the fourth round.

As a professional thief, he was dedicated to his career. The customer was his god. Although Wang Xun had quit, Qin Guan would still carry on!

As Xu Zheng put the jewellery in his own safe, Qin Guan made his final plan.

He would hang down from the tall building and break in through

the window of Xu's office.

Chapter 837: Guo Tao's Pants Fall Down

The crew was well-prepared for the scene. They cooperated with the property management company of the building and the best cleaning company in order to shoot it. The rent of the equipment alone devastated Qin Guan, who lowered his proud head before the cost and agreed to use a body double.

The experienced man hung outside the window and finished the scene quickly. He had actually risked his life for a really low price.

His agent was quite satisfied with the crew though. Not all filmmakers considered their work important. If they ran out of money, most crews tended to cut down the body double's salary. Some directors thought of them as mere figurants.

As he sat by the office desk, Qin Guan patted the young man's shoulder. Some appreciation would cheer him up.

Everyone left the office except for the cameraman. Qin Guan carefully used a stethoscope on the safe in an effort to figure out the code.

When the door cracked open, Xu Zheng approached him from behind with a crossbow.

Confident about his skill, he shouted at the thief, "Hey!"

Qin Guan was too absorbed in his work to hear the greeting. Angry and ashamed, Xu threw the cap of a pen at Qin Guan's head.

Qin Guan was a professional thief, so he wouldn't allow himself to be captured without putting up a fight. He looked around furtively and fixed his eyes on a paper knife on the table.

The cameraman moved the camera slowly. This was the only fight in the film after all.

Xu Zheng believed in the principle of fighting an enemy face to face, so he told Qin Guan to turn around. This gave Qin Guan a

chance to resist. He threw the knife at Xu at the same time that Xu shot him.

Of course, neither of them was a martial artist, so the pen and the knife fell down on the floor. The special effects would be added later. The two men just kept acting.

Qin Guan got shot on the chest, while his knife sliced Xu's throat.

All clear. Qin Guan pulled the pen out of his chest and grabbed the jewellery. Panting, he took off his mask and called his employer to report the good news.

Buzz....

The phone started ringing suddenly in the office. Startled, Qin Guan hung up immediately. Silence prevailed in the office.

Qin Guan dialled the number again and the phone on the desk started ringing loud and clear. Qin Guan answered the phone with a sense of foreboding.

"Hello?" He heard his own voice through the receiver.

"What the f*ck?"

"Cut! Get ready for the next scene, you two!"

As everyone got to work, Guo Tao tried to negotiate with Ning Hao.

"Can I keep my pants on during this scene?"

"You don't need to take your pants off. It's forbidden in China anyway. I asked the prop master to choose some underpants for you."

Yes, those beautiful flowery underpants.

"I was just wondering why my pants have to fall down during the fight. And why does Qin Guan get to keep his pants on? Everyone knows the girls would go crazy if Qin Guan's pants fell... You'll get a bigger audience. No one will be interested in me!"

"Rubbish! You'll be pushing Qin Guan down against the floor anyway. No one will be able to see his costume. Just do your job!"

We do not have any actresses on site, so there's no need to be embarrassed.

"Attention, please! Three, two, camera!"

The two men began wrestling in the elevator. When the door opened, the policemen found the two guys rolling around on the floor. Guo Tao was sitting on top of Qin Guan's body. His underpants were trembling in the frame, showing his effort to catch the robber.

"Cut!"

No one laughed. Everyone was confused. "Qin Guan, I have a plan."

"What's that?"

"I would like to send a photo to the media with the title 'Guo Tao beating the award-winning actor'..."

Qin Guan hesitated. "Good idea. Don't forget to pay me for the extra promotion."

"Of course!"

Chapter 838: Four Directors

Of course, this was a joke. They were all decent guys. Ning Hao would be shameless if he promoted his work this way. The farewell dinner ended silently as everyone drifted away reluctantly in the capital.

Qin Guan was busy with the next steps of production, which included editing, post-production, distribution, etc. His first stop would be the China Film Group Corporation, the company that represented the entire nation. Their subordinate cinemas were his first choice.

If they reached an agreement, the company's cinemas in Shanghai and Guangzhou would screen the film.

The negotiation went well. The job depended on the professional managers of his firm, but Qin Guan served as a flag leading an army. Thanks to him, the director of China Film Group would say yes.

Qin Guan took advantage of this chance to idle around the company and refresh his memories of the familiar director and staff. There was a good chance that they might remember him as well.

Meanwhile, Qin Guan took advantage of Huayi's resources. The Brothers supported their good partner strongly, but as successful businessmen, they also wanted to maximize the profit of the negotiation.

The news went viral among the directors, who heard that Qin Guan would show up at Huayi that day. They all turned up with scripts and started fighting in advance.

As an exclusive director of Huayi, Feng Xiaogang mocked the other well-informed men.

"Wow! My great directors! You are all so smart... Is Huayi your

company? Such a talented actor is very rare. Do you plan on luring him in with your scripts? Stop daydreaming! He is one of the bosses of Huayi. I have priority here!"

The three directors were speechless. Feng Xiaogang even insisted on sitting far away from them, because he was known for "fighting for the dignity of commercial directors". Jiang Wen, who was the youngest of the three, spoke up first.

"I don't agree with you, Director Feng. Chinese people should be united. I am on friendly terms with Qin Guan and Huayi. Although I'm an independent director, I didn't come here today for the money. I know I'm not welcome at Huayi, but we shouldn't be waiting here!"

Feng got even angrier. I'm an exclusive director of Huayi, but I still have to wait here with you guys.

The Wang Brothers became nervous when the four men appeared together in their office. They hid in another office and asked their secretary to lead them to a meeting room. The news about Qin Guan had spread really fast, which meant that the company could be filled with spies.

Unfortunately, there were no secrets in the entertainment circle. Plus, one of the four directors had cooperated with Qin Guan before.

It was Zhang Yimou. The previous year, the domestic box office had experienced a big success. The leaders couldn't help but pick up their weapons again and try to challenge big-budget commercial films. They foresaw a bright future for their films.

That was why they had gone there with their best scripts. They were itching for another round. The biggest entertainment company had become their first choice for getting money and good actors.

It was not a coincidence that the four of them had gotten

together. It was rare for a domestic actor to be so popular and rich. Qin Guan was though.

As the four prestigious directors were enjoying some free tea in the meeting room, Qin Guan reached the Wang Brothers' office through a secret elevator.

The Brothers rubbed their hands awkwardly as they explained the situation in the meeting room. They had expected Qin Guan to be annoyed, but he was actually itching to try.

What an exciting moment! Four famous directors are fighting over me! This is wonderful!

Qin Guan wanted to watch the world burn, so he said goodbye to the Brothers and headed to the meeting room.

The directors' staring contest had reached its peak. As soon as Qin Guan pushed the door open, a spring breeze and a light rain entered the room.

The sum of the ages of the four directors was almost 200, so Qin Guan greeted them politely from the door.

Chapter 839: Four Scripts

"Hello, Director Zhang. It's nice to see you again. Long time no see!"

"How are you, Director Jiang? Thank you so much for recommending me to Xu Jinglei. Our film has been short-listed by the San Sebastian International Film Festival."

"Director Feng! Don't look at me, it's not my fault. I couldn't find a suitable role in the scripts you suggested."

"Director Chen, this is the first time we meet."

Qin Guan shook hands with them one after the other. When he took a seat, he found himself at the end of the long table, a position usually reserved for leaders.

The four directors were looking at him anxiously. What a strange situation!

Feng Xiaogang was a straightforward man, so he made his purpose clear right away.

"I have a script for you, Qin Guan. The company asked me to try directing a commercial, big-budget production. Select a role from it."

He pushed a thick binder towards Qin Guan, sliding it over the slick table. The black characters on the white cover looked attractive.

They spelled the words "The Banquet"!

Before Qin Guan could come back to his senses, the other three directors had also taken out their own scripts, afraid that they would be left behind.

"Read mine first. The character is very expressive."

The film was called "Curse Of The Golden Flower"!

"I'm different, Qin Guan. You like indie films and winning awards, right? My script is very profound!"

The film's title was "The Sun Also Rises"!

"We haven't cooperated before, Qin Guan. As a young actor, you should try all kinds of different shooting methods. It would be good for earning experience."

The film was "The Promise" by Chen Kaige!

The four binders lay before him in order, just like a student's homework. The gazes of the famous directors cheered Qin Guan up.

He had originally thought that they just wanted to get some money from him, but he had been offered four roles.

Qin Guan had a tight schedule that year. "The Knot" would be a promising candidate for the Chinese Ornamental Column Awards. If the film won an award, the SARFT would leave him alone.

Plus, he would also be working on "Crazy Stone", a new Armani advertisement, and his own brand and accounting firm.

He had no time to work with these directors, but the four men seemed determined to get a final answer. It was a taboo to offend a director from the circle.

Maybe Qin Guan could guest star in their films. This would add a fun element to the films and save the dignity of the famous directors.

When he made a decision, Qin Guan asked about "The Banquet" first.

"Huayi is producing it, right? The film must be rich in resources, but the roles are out of my league. I'll be going to Hong Kong in April for the Hong Kong Film Awards. I have been planning this since before the Spring Festival. Sorry about that."

"As for Director Jiang..."

Jiang Wen pointed to the script immediately. "I know you are a busy guy. I'll be the protagonist, so you could just select a supporting role. The schedule will be flexible. Filming will take you one week at the most."

"Okay!"

Qin Guan put the script on the left side of the table as an alternative offer.

He gasped when he heard Zhang Yimou's plan. The director had hired Chow Yun-Fat, Gong Li and Jay Zhou for the film. Qin Guan would be the eldest prince, who was a nitwit. It would be interesting to act like a lecher.

Plus, the film would be shot between other events. Qin Guan wanted to be one of the big stars, so he put "Curse Of The Golden Flower" on the left.

Zhang leaned back against his chair. He could relax now.

In 20 minutes, there was only one script left in Qin Guan's hands. Chen Kaige was confident about Qin Guan's decision. He stood out among the fifth generation of directors after all.

Unlike Zhang Yimou, who had started his career as a cameraman, he was not good with color and backgrounds. He relied on the plot and profound emotions to win awards, but he enjoyed a good reputation among the Chinese audience.

Qin Guan looked up from the script.

"I'm sorry, but I can't do it, Director Chen. Your film will begin filming in June and my character is in every scene. Plus, the crew will be travelling to Shangri-La. I will be attending an event at the time. I look forward to working with you in the future though."

People were rejected plenty of times during their lives. Some people just smiled through the experience, while others felt dejected or insulted.

Chapter 840: The Hong Kong Entertainment Circle

After his offer was rejected, Feng tugged on Qin Guan's shirt, asking for more capital. Meanwhile, Chen Kaige left the building with a smile and got into his car. Then he sighed before his wife, Chen Hong.

"Qin Guan said no."

"Alas! Young people are so proud nowadays. He just turned down your script face to face?"

"Of course. Young people have been succeeding a lot lately. He's won international awards, invested in domestic films, engaged actively in the industry... Rich men prevail nowadays."

Chen Hong was no longer a young lady, but her past charm was still lingering on her face. The woman tried to comfort her husband.

"Actually, Qin Guan is not that amazing. He is only a handsome guy with a lot of young fans. We could just offer the part to another actor like him."

"It's hard to find such a guy in China. Huang Xiaoming is too young. Chen Kun is not good at commercial films..."

"Don't limit yourself, Chen. We can look for an actor abroad. The South Korean fad is all the rage in Southeast Asia and China. We could cast the most handsome, popular guy among them. We could cast Zhang Dongjian!"

"But we'd have to work extra hard to get a foreign actor. Plus, Koreans ask for a lot of money. We would go over budget."

Chen Hong smiled at her husband. The man was good at directing, but ignorant when it came to commercial films.

"You think too much. We wanted to hire Qin Guan because of his

money and acting skills. His salary would have been considered an investment. If Qin Guan worked only as an actor, instead of a producer, how much would you pay him? His value in Hollywood is 1.2 billion!"

"This way, we will be saving money. We must show the Tiancheng Entertainment Company our sincerity. We are supporting them by giving up our original plan and trying some foreign actors. We are being kind to the newly-founded, rising company."

Chen nodded. He was not good at handling complicated issues.

Chen Hong smiled again and asked the driver to start the car.

Wang Liying was reading the four scripts carefully in Qin Guan's car. She was very confused by Qin Guan's choice.

Actually, Qin Guan had seen all four films during his past life, so he had just picked the two most successful ones.

One of them had been selected by the Venice Film Festival, while the other one had made a box office record by grossing 100 million yuan.

Qin Guan mentally apologized to Feng and Chen, but he had to think about his own benefit.

Actually, he had to apologize to a lot of people, including the crew of "The Knot" and Cong Nianwei. He had been busy preparing for the Hong Kong Awards, so he hadn't seen her in a long time.

Although the Hong Kong film industry was declining, the award ceremony was still in its early stages. Thanks to the lingering power of gangster films and comedies, the event was still popular among viewers in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Nicolas Tse was among the people who picked Qin Guan up at the airport. The two young men had become good friends, so the paparazzi had the chance to take a picture of the two of them together.

The reporters, who had been limited to that small area, finally discovered something interesting.

Wow! Qin Guan and Tse seem very close to each other. As far as we know, Tse is not the only actor who has cooperated with him. Nobody else has showed up though. Does this mean that Qin Guan does not get along with the older generation? Is Qin Guan a rebel?

All kinds of rumors were published in the newspapers along with the photos. Qin Guan had unintentionally contributed a lot to the Hong Kong entertainment industry.

The next day, he walked to a newsstand next to his hotel on the Tsim Sha Tsu Beach wearing sunglasses, a shirt and a pair of shorts.

Chapter 841: The Top 50 Most Handsome Guys In The World

Qin Guan bought some magazines to keep as souvenirs. During breakfast, he read "TIME" and checked out his ranking on the list of the Top 50 Most Handsome Guys In The World. Qin Guan chuckled to himself.

His fans had already posted a scanned picture of the magazine on his blog, but it was wonderful to read the news with his own eyes. The finely printed magazine pleased him.

This was the first time he had been selected as one of the 50 Most Handsome Guys In The World. His ranking was pretty high as well. As the most handsome guy in Asia, his international ranking couldn't be too low. Asians were pretty passionate after all.

He had actually ranked ninth, just below Marlon Brando, but above Brad Pitt, Keanu Reeves and other handsome Hollywood men of the same generation.

The editor of "TIME" had chosen a colorful photo of Qin Guan, which looked splendid next to the black-and-white photo of Marlon Brando.

A modern young man had forced his way among timeless actors. This was a success of race representation. Now Asian men wouldn't complain about the list, although only three Asian stars had been selected.

Qin Guan wondered what the judges' criteria had been, as all South Korean men had been weeded out. The other two Asian men were an Indian Bollywood actor and a Canadian-Chinese model.

In 2006, Qin Guan beat the Koreans, who were famous for their cosmetic surgeries. Only people who relied on their real looks and acting skills, like Zhang Dongjian, could compete against Qin Guan in Southeast Asia.

Qin Guan didn't care about his ranking. Actually, even during their prime time, those deceased timeless actors wouldn't have been able to compete with him when it came to looks. Such men always remained perfect in people's memories though. It was too complicated to explain.

Some people might have considered that list the ultimate honor, but Qin Guan just turned the page with a smile.

As he was enjoying a fried bacon sandwich and some milk, a newspaper title made him spit his food out on the paper.

An elegant lady shot a disdainful glance at him and turned her body away. Qin Guan wiped his mouth awkwardly with a tissue and kept reading the news. He certainly had not expected this.

"Nicholas Tse met his secret girlfriend at night after picking up his friend from the airport."

There were two photos under the headline.

The first one was clear. It showed Qin Guan and Nicholas Tse going out of the airport with their shoulders touching. They were not the same height, but they could still chat happily.

The other photo looked like a secret snap.

Tse was hugging a woman in a street corner. The readers could only see her back and jaw, but Qin Guan could speculate about her identity.

He took out his cell phone and dialled a familiar number.

After a long while, a man answered the call. He sounded both sleepy and exhausted.

"Hey, Qin Guan! What's the matter?"

"Did you read the newspaper today? You are in trouble, dude! Did you meet Cecilia Cheung last night after we separated?"

Nicholas Tse came back to his senses immediately.

"How did you know that, Brother Qin? We've been keeping it a secret!"

"So you say." Qin Guan stuffed the last piece of bacon into his mouth. Wang Liying sighed and stood up to get him some more.

Qin Guan explained as he chewed his food.

"Photos of you were published in 'The Sun'. All Hong Kongers must be reading the news while eating breakfast."

Before his voice could fade away, he heard some noise from the other end of the line.

Qin Guan hung up and moved on to the other gossip in the newspaper. Actually, he liked to see the world in chaos.

Ten minutes later, as he was enjoying his last fried egg, Tse called him back.

Chapter 842: The Hong Kong Film Awards

Tse sounded frustrated. "You trapped me! I just went out to buy some newspapers and the reporters caught me off guard!"

"So what? You still bought the newspapers."

"Cheung came with me to throw away the garbage. We were caught! I was only wearing a pair of shorts and a tank..."

So you are blaming me for your carelessness?

"They didn't disclose the name of my girlfriend though. The photo was too blurry! How did you know my girlfriend is Cheung?"

Qin Guan finished his breakfast and answered calmly.

"I figured it out based on the gossip online and the rumors circulating among the Hong Kong entertainment circle."

Tse was speechless.

"I suggest that you contact your agency immediately and make a counter attack. As your friend, I wanted to warn you personally. Why did Ms. Cheung insist on following you out this morning? I don't want to say anything else on the matter. Remember, I'm always on your side."

Nicolas Tse hung up and rushed to his agency. He was touched by Qin Guan's words. Ever since he had been a child, he had always lived in the public eye because of his parents. The rebellious boy had tried his best to be himself instead of the son of Patrick Tse and Deborah Lee. He was always surrounded by people, but few of them were sincere friends. It was seldom that someone warned him despite the risk of ruining their relationship.

Qin Guan was a new friend of his, but he had done everything for his own good. His honest, sincere friend had moved him. The man, who had always longed for love, felt a long-lost warmth.

He knew that this had been Cheung's plan all along, but a lover

could be forgiven. Lovesick men often acted foolishly. Tse had been really silly.

When his agent asked about his opinion on the disclosure of the romance, the young man nodded without hesitation. Thus, the Hong Kong Film Awards were out-shadowed by these striking news.

The opening ceremony took place amid that gloomy atmosphere.

The ceremony was held at the Hong Kong Cultural Center, where Hong Kong culture and art were celebrated. The building was full of artwork from different eras and all kinds of cultural artefacts. The beautiful piece of architecture had been built for culture, not for commerce.

The most important Hong Kong film awards would be held there to show off the charm of Hong Kong's culture.

The night view was beautiful there. The sparkling lights cheered everyone up. Qin Guan put on a forced smile and headed to the main hall of the culture center with Zhou Xun's hand locked in his. He had to be careful with his public image, so he suffered through Zhou Xun's physical and mental torture. The reporters thought he looked very solemn.

"Qin Guan always smiles on the red carpet. Why is he so serious today?"

"Yes! Look at his bitter smile!"

"Could he be disappointed about his upcoming failure?"

"Yes, it's possible."

Qin Guan had returned to the Chinese film circle after all. Chinese film festivals enjoyed an important status among the audience of the Chinese mainland.

"Wow! The award-winning actor is under pressure. What a good stunt!"

The reporters thought they had discovered the truth, but Qin Guan and Zhou Xun were having a subtle negotiation as they walked.

"It hurts. Don't pinch me, Sister Xun! It will be hard to explain to my girlfriend where I got the bruise."

"You insulted me! You asked that boy to pick you up from the airport instead of me! You hurt my feelings! The reporters will think that the protagonists of our film do not get along!"

"My bad! My bad! Show mercy! Ouch!"

After a final attack, the ambassador led Qin Guan to his seat, so he managed to escape from her.

Qin Guan smiled at Gillian Chung awkwardly. "Excuse me!"

Gillian Chung was a ceremony ambassador. The position of the master of ceremony was always taken by a beautiful young actress, but the ceremony ambassadors that year were extremely pretty. It was Fiona Sit, Yumiko Cheng and Gillian Chung.

Chung was the ambassador that guided Qin Guan. The shy girl flushed at his friendly smile.

Qin Guan found the girl really cute, so he smiled at her again when he took a seat. The girl escaped like a blushing rabbit.

Chapter 843: My Dream

The lovely girl left... What a pity!

Before Qin Guan could think too much about it, people started taking their seats around him. He looked up and saw countless strange faces.

Aaron Kwok, Leung Ka-Fai, Simon Yam... Every single one of them was a Hong Kong gangster film star. They were the loyal and mighty blood brothers in the Chinese audience's memory. In the middle sat a young guy who was fond of culture and arts...

What a strange group of people!

Zhou Xun was sitting among a group of actresses with a forced smile. She was discussing something with Sammi Cheng and Sylvia Chang.

Qin Guan knew that they were making fun of him. Before he could stand to warn Zhou, a thick, large hand patted him on the back.

Leung Ka-Fai spoke to him with the might of a gang leader, the manner of a killer and the smile of a psychopath. "You have won four acting awards. You are already the most famous actor in the Chinese film circle, so let this award go. Don't compete against us."

Qin Guan swallowed nervously. This is not a secret deal, Brother. There is a big number of judges voting for the final result.

"All young men have dreams, Brother Leung. Could you please give me a chance to make a grand slam? If you care about my happiness, would you leave this Chinese award to me?"

I like this shameless guy!

Leung burst into laughter and hugged Qin Guan. "You are really funny, dude. Next time you come to Hong Kong, I'll pick you up from the airport. Forget about Nicolas Tse! I like befriending

young men!"

As they were whispering to each other, Eric Tsang, who was the host of the event, fixed his eyes on them.

"It's nice to see two competitors talk so harmoniously. It seems like they won't come to blows over the award. The next award is the highest honor for any actor!"

He opened the envelope solemnly and read the names out loud in the most dramatic manner. The host was actually trembling.

"The actors selected for the next round are Aaron Kwok, Leung Ka-Fai, Simon Yam and Qin Guan..."

"And the winner is... Leung Ka-Fai..." His voice trailed off as Leung turned to comfort the young man next to him. Then Tsang finished his sentence loudly.

"... and Qin Guan!"

What? Everyone turned to the host in shock.

What? Another double-yolked egg? Where is the other award then?

Tsang pulled a second award from under the table. The twin girls stood there with their shoulders touching.

Qin Guan and Leung exchanged a glance and then walked to the stage through the narrow hallway, their shoulders also touching. They accepted their awards together, enjoying the highest honor an actor could experience.

They clinked their awards like glasses and then lifted them up. This simple gesture made the atmosphere heat up. Everyone got really excited.

This was an interesting result. It was a success for both traditional gangster films and modern indie films. Even Zhou Xun, who was an award-winning actress herself, couldn't help but admire the handsome young man on the stage.

Qin Guan was only 26 years old. He was still at the prime of his life, yet he had been winning awards one after the other. No common person would have expected this.

Unfortunately, no one could predict his limitations or how stressful his future might be. Nobody could guess his thoughts or intent. He was like a breeze in the Chinese and international film circle. A breeze that was getting fiercer and fiercer. A small tornado that would turn into a global storm.

The tornado had travelled from Europe to North America and then Asia, getting larger and stronger. Qin Guan won every award, as if there was no competition.

The year 2006 belonged to him. He was the man who had defined the entertainment circle in Asia, as well as the Western world. The most splendid star that night in Hong Kong left as fast as he could, creating enough topics of conversation for the entire city to discuss.

Chapter 844: Hani Village

One year later, "The Knot" was brought to light again by the audience of four different regions. This was great timing, as the film "Charlie And The Chocolate Factory" had just left theaters and another big film was on its way.

Thanks to a firm push from Qin Guan, Director Yin Li asked for one more month on the calendar and double screenings for the film. When "The Da Vinci Code" was released, everyone was impressed by Yin's forethought, when the credit really belonged to Qin Guan.

The final box office of "The Knot" was 53 million yuan. This was the first time a mainstream film made such a big profit. Now the China Film Group recognized the value of Qin Guan's information.

The storm of "The Da Vinci Code" swept the globe, attracting the attention of the entire world.

The film, which discussed religion, logic and humanity, became the most striking hit of the time. It also dared to challenge several religious concepts, which shocked both professional filmmakers and common people.

Qin Guan's outstanding performance was another selling point. His control of the suspenseful movie, as well as his subtle expressions, were remarkable.

In a week, the film's gross had reached 4.9 billion dollars, topping both the North American and international box office. A large sum of that capital found a purpose immediately. Qin Guan was now considered "a bankable star".

Scripts, collaboration proposals, and investment deals were pouring into his office. All his staff could do was file them away.

Meanwhile, Qin Guan had joined the crew of "The Sun Also Rises". He just wanted to avoid any trouble caused by the film. He

and Cong Nianwei were terribly annoyed by the people following them around, but he had promised Jiang Wen that he would participate in the controversial film.

The film told the story of the crazy people of that unspeakable era.

After taking an airplane, a train and a jeep, Qin Guan finally reached the Hani village in the Yunnan Province. The small village, which had a population of no more than 1,000, was located in a beautiful valley. The sound of birds echoed in the thick forest under the blue sky.

In Jiang's opinion, this place showed the beauty of Chinese humanity.

There were four independent stories told in the film, but the predestined relationships between the characters were the connecting point.

The first story was about Qin Guan and Zhou Yun, which was a simple, yet important link.

Qin Guan reached the village in a truck that carried pebbles and red soil. He felt uncertain about the crew's ideas.

"You want to reconstruct the village? But I've heard that it's an anthropological reserve."

"Of course not!" an assistant explained to him. "To avoid any damage to the village, we transported all the props here from other places. Plus, we'll build all the sets out of wood, soil and stone transported from nearby towns. When we finish shooting, we'll return everything to its original place."

"This is a real film with a budget of more than one billion dollars. We are not like those people that lied about their budget and destroyed the natural environment of Shangri-La."

This reminded Qin Guan of a film he had turned down.

"Are you talking about 'The Promise'?"

The assistant cheered up immediately.

"Exactly! Do you know what the director's wife told Director Jiang?"

"No, tell me."

"Some of our scenes will be set in Shangri-La's valley, while they have chosen locations such as the Heaven Pool and the Flower Ocean. Nevertheless, she said that they might visit some other places and asked us to wait until they finished the entire film, which was totally unreasonable!"

"Did Director Jiang agree?"

"Of course not! He just laughed!"

The elegant man was very proud. His pride was actually the driving force of his career.

Qin Guan, who worshipped Director Jiang, finally reached his destination. He and Zhou Yun started preparing in the dressing room for their first scene.

Zhou Yun would be playing Qin Guan's mother in the film, even though the girl was actually one year younger than him.

Qin Guan couldn't help but stare at Zhou Yun. The stylist was putting makeup on her tentatively. She was supposed to be a widowed mother who had raised her son alone during that era, yet she did not have a single wrinkle on her face. Those hard times hadn't left a mark on her.

This doesn't make any sense!

Qin Guan went out in his costume, which was a front-close jacket and a loose, short pair of pants, and walked over to Jiang Wen to talk about character image design.

Chapter 845: The Sauce

"Director, no one would dress like this in the countryside back in the 1970s. My mother looks younger than me! Is there no unspoken rule about this?"

Jiang Wen kicked him on the butt. "There are no unspoken rules in my film. I'm just trying to meet everyone's demands. You should be happy you are dressed decently. Now go away!"

Qin Guan left immediately and rushed to his fake home, which was a bamboo house in the village. The prop master set down a ladder in front of him.

"Attention, please! We are shooting the first scene! The story of banyan. Three, two, camera!"

Everyone stepped back like the tide, leaving Qin Guan to stand in front of the camera in confusion.

"Qin Guan, your mother is on the tree again!" a kind man told the young man, bringing him a ladder.

Qin Guan put the ladder under his arm and rushed to the entrance of the village. He looked anxious and helpless as he hurried to save his only relative in the world.

He set the ladder down against the tree and climbed up like a monkey, which seemed to satisfy Jiang Wen.

"Okay! Cut! Change costume and let's go again!"

What for? Zhou climbed up the tree repeatedly, so Qin Guan had to rescue her again and again. They had to change costumes to show that these were different occasions.

After several takes, Qin Guan's job that morning was finished. He looked at the large table in the yard and fell into thought.

The crew must have brought these local dishes.

When everyone saw the delicious food, they went crazy. Qin

Guan squeezed in and took a seat. He was sitting on a small stool next to Jiang Wen. He had no time to moisten his throat with the famous Pu-erh tea. Instead, he just stretched his chopsticks straight towards the main course.

He had to take advantage of every minute, or the other stronger men would leave nothing for him. The main course was Hani chicken with sauce.

In other places in China, sauce was only a side for the main dish, but in the Yunnan Province, it could be an independent dish.

The chicken looked like aluminium foil in the colorful sauce.

You didn't read wrong. Hani sauce consisted of different materials and colors. It contained white salt, red chilli, green leaves and black fermented beans.

Plus, the chicken entrails that had been boiled in the original soup were mixed with chicken blood bean curd and eggs. A bowl of sauce alone could feed a grown man. That was why the Hani sauce was so popular.

Qin Guan was good at seizing food. He took half the chicken into his own bowl and handed it to Wang. Then he began fighting with the others over the sauce. The best part was the yolk and the guts.

After filling Wang's bowl, Qin Guan buried his face into his own bowl.

Wang was shocked by the egg. Its soft taste made it even better than the meat!

Qin Guan made fun of her.

"Why are you crying over dinner?"

Wang hastened to wipe her tears away in an effort to hide the fact that she had been crying. "It's really hot!" Qin Guan pushed the baked bean curd towards her.

"Try this to suppress the taste. It's crisp and soft. It's not that

spicy." He was a real foodie!

When they had dined and wined to satiety, they began filming the afternoon scenes.

Chapter 846: Chinese Zhusuan

Although Qin Guan's mother was mentally disturbed, he was a smart boy. He was actually really good at Zhusuan. His calculation speed was even faster than a senior staff member's of the most popular bank at college.

Things were simple for Qin Guan. He expected to see the twists and turns of human nature, moving emotions and complex human ugliness in Jiang's film, so that he could refine his acting skills. The plot was like a start-from-scratch novel on Qidian's website though. It just described the lives of common people.

The plain boiled water, which was slightly sweet, was the perfect refreshment.

The difficulty of the scene was Zhusuan, which was a required basic skill. The actor had to be good at basic finger counting and able to work out the correct result on the abacus.

In modern times, few people could do that, but fortunately, Qin Guan was one of them. That skill was a must for an accounting student. It was also a basic skill for any Chinese accountant, including Qin Guan, who was a field professional.

Using a large abacus borrowed from an old villager, the award-winning actor showed off his unique technique before everyone.

He performed a simple addition from one to 100. His dancing fingers and the cracking sound of the beads elevated his skill to a higher level.

Jiang Wen turned on the camera to film the scene silently. The young man in the white clothes was sitting by the table in the spring breeze. A soft cloud was floating in the air. He smiled as he heard the sound of the beads. This was a memory of his youth.

Jiang Wen rested his jaw on his crossed fingers. This was his trademark gesture. He had been working on this script since 2000,

so he didn't want to see it suffer the same fate as the previous ones.

They had all won international awards, but they had been banned by the SARFT at home. As soon as he expressed the intention of making a movie or finding a producer, someone would invite him for a cup of tea and explain to him the importance of China's international image.

After he had worked on it for a long time, the script had finally been approved. The best parts had to be kept in the dark though, so he had added a lot of metaphors and secret clues to the common story. Nevertheless, he had slowly realized that it was another internationally-orientated film.

The box office would be a disaster. This was okay with the Emperor Group. They could cover the expenses. What he was worried about was his reputation and the actors' image.

Especially Qin Guan. Will his fans laugh at him?

Jiang Wen sighed, but Qin Guan's smile reassured him. This was only the beginning. Qin Guan was like a storm. Thanks to him, the film would do better.

The movie had gone a different way ever since Qin Guan had joined the crew.

Jiang Wen kept working with determination. Qin Guan's mother had dug up a hole under the tree and found an underground hot spring. This attracted Qin Guan's attention, who rushed to the pit immediately and jumped down, yelling at his mother, "Stop causing trouble for me!"

He sat down in the pit and threw a cobblestone out with force. The young man was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

His mother didn't care though. She just squatted down and kept doing the same thing. Qin Guan sat down at the mouth of the spring in an effort to stop her.

It's so hot! My butt must look like a monkey's.

Zhou slapped him for disturbing her.

Qin Guan did not cry out or leave. He just stuffed her into a basket. In the mountainous areas of Southwest China, this was a traditional way of carrying kids.

Qin Guan would carry his mother on his back instead.

Chapter 847: An Awkward Scene

Even though she was a slender girl, Zhou Xun was still too heavy for Qin Guan. The two of them seemed to be suffering amid the beautiful landscape.

Qin Guan walked with difficulty down the trembling bamboo bridge as butterflies and singing birds flew around him. The scene was dark, yet also funny.

At the end of the scene, Qin Guan was faced with a great difficulty.

I'm fine with swimming in the clean river, but why do I have to pee? Although only his naked back would be visible, Qin Guan still felt terrible.

"You will be making a sacrifice for art!"

"No! This is not art!"

"This is an outlet for a simple young man living in nature!"

"Peeing is an outlet?"

"I'll give you three kilos of Hani veal for your wife!"

"10!"

"Deal!"

Qin Guan sold himself out for food.

Jiang cleared away all the idlers, leaving only the cameraman on set.

The clear, cool river was waiting for Qin Guan's esteemed presence amid the sunny day.

Qin Guan was wearing a short-sleeved T-shirt and a pair of black pants. He leaned in and fell into the river. His wet clothes stuck to his body, drawing the outline of his muscles.

Qin Guan started backstroking in the river, creating a beautiful

picture of a young man in nature.

Then he returned to the bank and took off all his clothes. Every inch of his skin was crying for warmth under the sunshine.

"Quick! Do it!" Jiang and the cameraman were looking at him eagerly.

It had taken him too long to take off his clothes. Let's get straight to the point!

Qin Guan was under great pressure. Everyone knew that it was impossible to carry out even an everyday task when one had four eager eyes fixed on their back.

Qin Guan was a real genius though. He was a professional actor, so he eventually managed to force some urine out.

Director Jiang was really satisfied with the result.

One should never try to discuss the meaning of a scene with an indie film director. Was this scene meaningless nonsense? Or was Jiang just sacrificing Qin Guan for the box office? Qin Guan had no idea.

Some crazy fans would go to the cinema just to watch that though.

The short story ended when Qin Guan's mother saw reason. While she had been pregnant, her husband had cheated on her and fallen in love with a Russian woman in the army. Thus, he had died in shame instead of dying a martyr. Zhou Yun had returned to his hometown with his ashes and raised his child.

Suddenly, she came back to her senses, got rid of her love for her husband and son, and threw herself into the river.

A pair of red embroidered shoes floated in the river as the old Russian song "Katyusha" played. Its hidden meaning was really profound.

If it wasn't for Jiang's explanation, Zhou Yun and Qin Guan

would never have understood its subtle connotation.

Chapter 848: A Ripe Peach

The next story had nothing to do with Qin Guan, but the presence of Anthony Perry and Joan Chen explained Jiang Wen's typical narrative technique.

The next storyline was a mixture of dubious plot development, meaningless scenes, sudden turns and mysterious characters. If one compared Qin Guan's tragedy to a romantic story, the story of Chen Chong, Jiang Wen and Anthony Perry would be a depiction of the twisted humanity of those times.

Qin Guan felt depressed, so he tried to think about other things in order to relax.

Has Cong Nianwei received the package I sent her? The deadline for her design is drawing near. If everything goes well, she may be the leader of an independent team that will plan the reconstruction of the small stadium.

They had gotten used to the quick pace of modern society ever since they had graduated from college. This convenient way of communication allowed two people who were thousands of miles away to connect any time they wanted.

When will we get married though?

Someone touched Qin Guan gently, bringing him back to reality.

It was Yishan Kong, the actress who portrayed Jiang Wen's wife in the film. According to their relation, Qin Guan's character would call her auntie.

That was unfair, as she and Zhou Yun were nearly the same age.

Kong, who was a charming woman, was offended that the young man was ignoring her.

"What are you thinking about, Qin Guan?" she asked him. "I just greeted you."

Qin Guan would never tell anyone that he was missing his girlfriend, so he just pointed to the scene with a serious expression on his face.

"I was wondering why the teacher would commit suicide. Logically speaking, a person would be in a good mood if they got rid of all their troubles. A self-important man would be relieved to be free of that burden. He had nothing to worry about anymore. It was unnecessary for him to leave this dirty world."

Kong was impressed by Qin Guan's analysis. What a knowledgeable young man! He will be my partner!

Qin Guan secretly let out a sigh of relief. I'm good at lying. Why doesn't Cong Nianwei believe me?

It was because she knew the real Qin Guan!

The story ended soon. Before the two older actors could get to know the other members of the crew, they had to leave in a hurry. Qin Guan was disappointed, but the next scenes cheered him up.

Jiang Wen and Kong, who had witnessed the tragedy of his mother's death, were shocked by the duteous young man. He had found them a job and a place to stay in the village, as they had to rely on him in that strange place.

Kong, who was a fashionable lady from a big city, caused a storm in the small mountain village. She was like a ripe peach trembling on a branch. Her sweet smell stirred something in that village.

Qin Guan and Kong were talking to each other before the camera. The audience found the sexy woman really attractive. She was dressed decently as she used her crystal fingers to feed some chickens in the yard. She made the simple work of a peasant woman look really fascinating.

The two of them faced each other from afar. One of them was in the yard, and the other on the path.

"She has some questions for you, auntie," Qin Guan spoke first.

Kong looked around in confusion, but nobody was there except Qin Guan.

Qin Guan smiled and stepped aside. There was a little girl hiding behind him. Qin Guan was the only Mandarin speaker in the village, so he translated for them.

The girl told him something gently and he translated for Kong.

"She said she felt attracted to you the first time you met. She liked your appearance."

Men never understood why a woman's praise was much higher than a man's, but the delight it brought was irreplaceable. Even though the praise was coming from a little girl, Kong smiled wide.

Chapter 849: As Smooth As Velvet

She pinned her falling hair behind her ear. The upturned corner of her mouth betrayed her good mood. "I'm not a decent lady right now. I take care of chickens every day."

The girl didn't like hearing her talk about herself like that. Qin Guan translated for her again.

"She said that she has been observing you in secret for a few days. She likes your dress. She wants to be like you!"

Kong chuckled. The sound was like a trembling branch carrying blooming flowers. Her manners were fascinating.

"You are still a little girl," she answered seriously. "You have to wait 20 years till you become a lady like me!"

The girl had asked all her questions, so Qin Guan took advantage of the silence to ask one of his own.

"Which country does the name Katyusha come from?"

Kong Wei fixed her charming eyes on Qin Guan and gave him a meaningful answer. The subtle connotation behind her words was not that clear for a simple country man.

"It's a name given to Russian women. It also refers to a kind of rocket gun."

"A rocket gun?"

"Yes, they have given a gun a female name. Do you understand?"

It's too complicated.

Qin Guan crossed his arms before his chest with a silly smile.

"No."

Kong changed the topic awkwardly. "How old is she?"

The girl answered herself. "I'm 16 years old!"

The young girl was wearing her new red outfit and had put on some heavy makeup for the meeting. This was actually not a meeting between a beautiful lady and her admirer, but a way for the girl to stake her claim on Qin Guan before the foreign enchantress.

Qin Guan was stupefied. The girl had caught him completely off guard with her lie. His mouth opened slightly. Suddenly, Jiang Wen raised his arm from behind the camera.

"Cut!" The scene was over.

The temperature difference in that mountainous area during the spring was really big. In the evening, the temperature dropped extremely low.

Wang Liying helped Qin Guan put on his jacket. Then he suddenly saw Jiang Wen waving at him happily.

"Come here, Qin Guan!"

Qin Guan joined a group of local children actors.

The Hani children were good at hunting for food. They stole bird eggs, dug up bamboo shoot and caught pheasants and hares. These were considered basic skills for the local teens.

They were currently cooking their prey around the campfire. Two pheasants and a hare were being roasted in the pit. The natural salt and fermented soya beans made them smell great.

They were all sitting around the fire with sparkling eyes.

It was hard for those children to understand foreigners. They all looked like rich people from big cities. Why were they so interested in ordinary food?

They handed Qin Guan a dagger. He had studied the children's cutting skills earlier. His good appetite made everyone hungry.

They all ate and talked happily in the dark night. Their happy laughter and cheerful voices expressed their love for life.

The next day, they filmed a new scene.

Jiang Wen caught Kong and Qin Guan having sex in a small stone hut built by Zhou Yun.

Due to the strict rules that applied to erotic scenes in China, even Jiang Wen, who was a really brave director, spent only one second on it. The audience would only see their bare backs through the blurry windows.

"They tell me that my stomach is as smooth as velvet..."

They? How many men have you had sex with?

When Qin Guan was on his way back home, Jiang Wen attacked him and pressed a shotgun against his forehead.

Ever since the death of his mother, Qin Guan had developed iron nerves. He didn't fight back or beg for mercy on his knees. Instead, he just started talking about random things absent-mindedly.

"I have never seen velvet. What is it like?"

"You are going to die. Excuses are useless!" Jiang Wen answered fiercely.

"It's not an excuse. You can shoot me now. I was just wondering what velvet is like."

"Okay, I'll show you one day. But you will die right after you see it."

Chapter 850: Misery

The next actor that showed up was the symbol of a generation. Jiang Wen had tried his best to get the actor there. Strictly speaking, the man was not actually an actor, but a singer.

It was Cui Jian, the old god of rock music.

He had joined the crew as a guest star who would be playing a friend of Jiang Wen's who lived in Beijing.

He was a real friend, so he tried to persuade Jian Wen, who was a very hot-headed guy. He had researched the boy's background and reached the conclusion that Qin Guan was not the real reason behind Kong's betrayal.

She had just been lonely.

Convinced, Jiang Wen returned to the village and met Qin Guan again. The young man was determined to die though. As soon as he spread the velvet banner, he said, "Your wife's stomach is not like velvet at all."

Those were his last words.

Bang!

Thus, Qin Guan was killed just before the end of the film. Although he got a bonus again, he thought that his character had been courting death too hard. He repeatedly emphasized this to Jiang Wen.

No man could bear that, even if they were simple, kind and honest.

In Jiang's opinion, Qin Guan represented a group of bold, reckless and stupid people of the time.

On their way back, the crew made a small detour to Shangri-La to take a look. It was said that Chen had finished his job and left. Jiang Wen was a perfectionist though, so he wanted to re-shoot

some scenes there.

Everyone was shocked by the Flowers Ocean.

The flowers there had not been planted by humans to promote tourism. The place was a marvellous natural spectacle that had suffered through wind, rain, frost and intense heat. Different kinds of flowers were blooming silently on the high land.

If it wasn't for the development of tourism in the Yunnan Province, they would have lived there year after year and showed everyone their power and thirst for life.

Unfortunately, humans had found the place. When the crew of "The Promise" had arrived, they had proclaimed that they wanted to show the audience the beautiful view.

The wild flowers hadn't satisfied them though, so they had pulled out plenty of flowers and vines and left only the most beautiful and elegant flowers. They thought that people would like that.

Thus, they had put all the "noblest" flowers together to create a man-made garden. It was a really beautiful view, except that there was an ugly bare land behind it.

Butterflies and bees were lingering around, looking for honey, but the elegant flowers drove them away.

The place was a miserable mess. Everyone was feeling bitter hatred. It would take the ocean of flowers dozens of years to revert back to its original state.

Suddenly, the angry crew saw something strange on the hillside. They exchanged a glance and put on big masks.

On the bank of the beautiful Tianchi, a local administrator was pulling at an outlander.

"Tell me what happened! Stop!" The man had gotten really angry with a member of the crew.

Actually, the crew member was just the man in charge of

carrying the equipment and props.

He looked helpless as he tried to explain to the angry man.

"I'm just a member of the crew, I don't make any decisions here. This is none of my business!"

Qin Guan and his companions shot him a look and gasped.

Tianchi was a pond on high land, which was typically a rare sight. The water of the pond was transparent and crystal, as it was created from melting snow and it contained local minerals.

The pond had changed a lot though. Its naturally round bank had been destroyed, but the worse part was that the crew had built a floating bridge made of cement, stone pillars and wood along the bank.

That setting would appear in the film for just a few minutes, but the mysterious pond of the local legends would stay a muddy pond forever.

Chapter 851: A Way Of Escape

The floating bridge had been torn down, leaving only stone piers inside the lake like teeth in a monster's mouth. The sediment had mounted the bank. The clear water had gone muddy because of that.

Isn't the Tianchi an international geographical wonder? Isn't it an origin of romance for ethnic minorities in Yunnan? Why would a Chinese person do that?

Although this had nothing to do with Qin Guan, he was still filled with anger. As a Chinese man, he couldn't turn a blind eye to this. He pushed Jiang Wen's hands away and walked up to the two arguing men.

"Excuse me! May I know what the contract between the local government and the crew is?"

The confused man turned his face towards Qin Guan.

"We originally thought that they would just rent the place. They didn't allow the village committee or the staff from the local tourism bureau to be here though. The producer promised us that they would just film the natural view. They said they had to keep all the pictures secret for confidentiality issues. They said it was a big-budget production."

"They didn't hire any locals. They just signed a contract that the place would remain the same and paid the deposit. They didn't inform us when they left though. We wouldn't even have known if it wasn't for our children. They saw their trucks leave one after the other."

"We found this strange. If the shooting had ended without any problems, they would have let us know. This is one of the most important tourist attractions in the Yunnan Province after all. Many tourists come here especially for it. The surrounding villages

rely on this beautiful landscape. What are we supposed to do now? Our homeland has been destroyed!"

The man squatted down and put his hands on his head. He was weeping in heartbreak.

Everyone who was on Qin Guan's side felt sorry for the guy, as well as the crew member of "The Promise".

"Some crew members are still in town," Qin Guan told the man kindly. "Maybe Sister Chen, who is the producer, is also there. It would be impossible to restore this place to its original state anytime soon, but you could at least ask for some more money as compensation."

The man realized that this was his lifeline. He bowed before Qin Guan and the crew and ran away as fast as he could.

Qin Guan didn't say anything. He just sighed gently as he looked at the poor lake. Jiang Wen patted his shoulder in comfort.

"Fortunately, the Hani village looks nothing like this. At least I am a conscientious man."

Kong Wei couldn't stand those two sensitive guys any longer. She also hated to see beautiful things destroyed. "Hey! Let's go into town. We have to find a hotel before it gets dark anyway. Maybe we could also see how this whole thing ends!"

"Let's go!" Qin Guan and Jiang Wen agreed.

They headed to the small town downhill eagerly. It was a quiet town. Only a few dim light bulbs were on at the hotel, indicating that the place was open for business.

There was only one hotel in town, so they met an acquaintance there. The local man was sitting by a table looking confused. There was a crumpled piece of paper in his hands.

Qin Guan sat down next to him. "What happened? Did you find the producer?"

"I was too late. Maybe someone tipped them off. They left just before I got here, but they said they left some compensation money at the tourism bureau. I called the bureau just now. The person in charge of the program hasn't heard anything."

Chen had obviously lied to both sides to get off the hook. The crew would be dismissed in the capital and everyone would return to their original unit. It would be impossible for the local government to find the real culprit.

Meanwhile, the director would pin the problem on her subordinates. She was a real con-artist!

Qin Guan got even angrier and decided to help the man. "Do you have the original version of the contract? We'll be staying here for a few days. I have some lawyer friends that could help. We should appeal to the government and the law. China has been very passionate about environmental protection lately. I think you should tell everyone all over the country about the tragedy of Tianchi."

"Those public figures should be taught a lesson. They should be ashamed of what they did!"

Chapter 852: The Lausanne Track Meeting

The plain man found hope in his sincere words and decided to give Qin Guan all the documents. He had made a random kind acquaintance overnight.

Jiang Wen didn't stop Qin Guan. It was his decision to make. Actually, as a Chinese man, Jiang had no right to hold him back.

Chen Kang, who was awakened at midnight, read the contract on his computer with tears in his eyes. He felt deeply sorry for his past behavior concerning the small hutong. Lawyers went crazy about cases like this. He would become famous thanks to it.

I will take it on!

In the past, Chen Kang had liked to watch the world burn, but now he accepted this case without hesitation. The unpretentious man didn't express his gratitude for Qin Guan's help too dramatically. He just sent him a pheasant.

As soon as Qin Guan reached the capital, he met Cong Nianwei at the airport. When the crew of "The Promise" returned, they started slowly releasing news and photos about the film to attract the audience. The beautiful photos of the Flower Ocean were used for publicity.

There were warriors fighting for truth everywhere. Before Qin Guan could take any action, some tourists and local reporters showed the public the real Tianchi.

Cong Nianwei and Qin Guan looked at the photos of the miserable place.

"Were you in Yunnan? Did you visit the place in the pictures? Is what they say true?"

Qin Guan nodded solemnly. Thanks to the development of the internet, it was impossible to keep any striking news from the public. His calm girlfriend did not get angry often, but architects

always evaluated the environment before beginning construction.

Their everlasting concern was protecting the inherent ecological environment, not designing buildings. The professors at Columbia always tirelessly insisted on the importance of harmony between humans and nature. No professional architect would dare build amid an ecologically precious environment.

Human greed couldn't be allowed to take over every beautiful landscape in the world.

Cong Nianwei was really angry about the news. When she heard what Qin Guan had done in Yunnan though, she kissed him.

"Well done! We should teach them a lesson. Just leave the matter to the local government. If they do nothing, we will fight for that place."

Qin Guan burst into laughter and gave her a hug.

Absence made the heart grow fonder, but good things always came to an end. Qin Guan had to fly to Spain for an award ceremony. Then he would return to China as soon as possible to keep an eye on that matter.

Change always ruined every plan though. Before Qin Guan could even pack for Spain, he received a gift from Xu Xiaoxiao, his friend back in America. After graduation, he had started working in venture investment on Wall Street, but he had taken advantage of his few vacation days to buy tickets for the Lausanne Track Meeting and sent Qin Guan an invitation.

"We can fit it in our schedules. We could go to the Track Meeting first and then go experience the fierce Flamenco! What do you think?"

Qin Guan felt strange as he typed on the keyboard. "Is there a special reason you are going on this rare vacation?"

"Are you serious? You are less informed there in China than I am in America. I want to meet Liu Xiang!"

Liu Xiang? The athlete right below me on the Forbes list? Xu is a real patriot!

Qin Guan decided to say yes, so he travelled to Europe earlier to go to Lausanne.

Lausanne was a city located in the francophone south-west part of Switzerland. The city lay on the north bank of Lake Geneva and overlooked Evian-les-Bains and other beautiful landscapes from a distance. The Olympic Committee thought very highly of that wonderful setting, so its headquarters were stationed there. Lausanne was actually called the Capital of the Olympics.

Chapter 853: A Glimpse

Lausanne was both a historical city and a sports headquarters, so the stadiums there were renowned for their high quality. The Track Meeting attracted professional athletes and fans from all over the world. Sports stars shone like real stars over the sky. Before the opening ceremony could even begin, the news about the meeting had already spread.

Qin Guan was just an ordinary passenger, so his skin color helped him go through the airport unnoticed. It was black people that attracted the most attention.

Up until that point, Liu Xiang had only been famous in China. This was one of his first international achievements.

Xu Xiaoxiao, who had arrived in Lausanne early, met Qin Guan at the airport. Surprisingly, there was no crowd waiting for Qin Guan there. Qin Guan's team walked up to Xu while he was looking in the distance.

Wang Liying was already impatient due to the change in Qin Guan's schedule. This long trip would affect the actor a lot, so she didn't think very highly of the third generation of Chinese Freemasons in New York Chinatown. Of course, if she knew about Xu's background, she would have tried her best to prevent Qin Guan from communicating with the guy at all.

The girl tried to use her power anyway. "You must be Boss Xu, my boss' best friend. Thank you so much for your hospitality. You have covered the expenses of our entire team, which we really appreciate."

Han Zhujiu looked shocked behind Qin Guan. What? Xu paid for the trip? I knew nothing about this.

He held his questions back when he saw everyone nod along with Wang though. I'm a bodyguard, so I only care about getting my

money. I don't give a damn about who pays me.

Qin Guan and Xu Xiaoxiao didn't mind about Wang's warm greeting. Qin Guan, who was a careless guy, felt confident about his agent. Meanwhile, Xu was totally fascinated by the lovely girl.

The long-lost friends didn't notice the trap. They checked in happily and went to Liu Xiang's race the next day.

The stadium was already crowded because of the grand sports event. Thanks to Xu's influence, they had gotten good seats by the side of the track. This way, they could watch the whole process from the starting point right up to the last sprint.

It was a sunny day, so everything was going well for both the audience and the athletes. Qin Guan and Xu ignored the buzz of the reporters around them.

Qin Guan was wearing an ordinary baseball cap, a pair of jeans and a white T-shirt. He was sitting among thousands of ordinary people, watching the athletes get ready for the race. Everyone was concentrated on the red track under the bleachers. Athletes from all over the world were warming up down there.

The cameras scanned them one after the other. Thanks to the large screen above the stadium, even the audience farther away could see all the athletes clearly.

The commentator was reading out loud information about the athletes, including their personal best score, their best season score and their scores during the first and second round of the meeting.

Athlete No. 239, who was on the first track, was American Ryan Wilson. Liu Xiang from China was on the second track.

When the commentator got to Liu Xiang's name, Xu Xiaoxiao stood up to cheer for his favorite athlete.

Even though he was a third-generation American-Chinese immigrant, he hailed for people with the same blood as him. As his friend, Qin Guan felt touched. He was a real Chinese man as well

though, so he decided to help him.

The two of them stood up and started waving the Five-Star Red Flag fiercely on the stands. There were not many Chinese people in the stadium, with the exception of Chinese reporters and sports teams, so they attracted a lot of attention. The cameras recorded the moment and projected it on the large screen.

The team doctor was stunned. Some young audience members from Germany, France and Italy opened their mouths wide.

"It's Qin Guan!"

"It's him!"

The team doctor rushed up to the director of the sports team.

"I saw a celebrity on the screen. Qin Guan has come here to see Liu Xiang!"

"Who is Qin Guan?"

The team director was so focused on his job that he never even went to the cinema. That name meant nothing to him. The team doctor told him a few things about Qin Guan as fast as he could.

Chapter 854: Chaos

The team director didn't care about Qin Guan's films and awards. He only cared that he was a rich man with good relations with international fashion brands.

If he is a fan of Liu Xiang, maybe he could invest in our team in the future. Could I convince him to invest in some unpopular sports? I should have a word with him when the race is over!

Although the two men came from two completely different worlds, they had a good talk with each other. Everyone decided to contact Qin Guan to create a more striking publicity effect, promote the sports event and maximize the profits for the Chinese General Sports Administration.

Qin Guan had no idea that he had been exposed to determined people with high aspirations. He and Xu were sitting in their seats silently, waiting for the big moment.

They were both patriots, so they would always support Liu Xiang regardless of the final result. However, when they realized that he was the only Asian among Africans, they felt horrible.

"Do you remember our ethnology course back at Columbia? What is a common characteristic of black people? Their natural physique is the most suitable for races!"

"It probably is..." They exchanged an awkward smile. Suddenly, the race started.

Bang! The eight athletes on the starting line rushed out like arrows.

"Lausanne is Liu Xiang's lucky place. He has broken international youth records here. Now he is in the city again!"

"His start was not that good. He is only fifth among the eight athletes."

"It's been three hurdles already, but he is still lagging behind. The athlete on the third track is in the lead."

"Fifth hurdle! He suddenly started speeding up! Wow! Sprinters rarely start speeding up half-way through the race."

"His steps and rhythm are perfect, he's not affected by the others."

"Great! He jumped over the final hurdle and he's approaching the finish line first! We finally have a winner!"

Qin Guan and Xu Xiaoxiao bounced up excitedly the moment Liu's chest touched the tape. They could only express their excitement by screaming and waving their flag around fiercely. Only someone who was there could experience the passion of Chinese fans. They had forgotten about everything. They just wanted to express their emotions.

Before going to talk to the reporters, Liu Xiang sat down next to the timer with his international record. The young man loved to show off. International media loved guys like him. The reporters gathered around Liu Xiang, who was waving his arms and laughing in abandon.

As he looked at the crowd, Xu felt a sudden desire to laugh.

"Is this the first time you act like a fan instead of an idol?" he asked Qin Guan.

"He looks so happy right now. He must not understand the meaning of his achievement. His life will be full of flower bouquets and applause in the future. His every movement will be under the spotlight. Plus, he will also have to keep training hard. The hopes of the entire population will be resting on his shoulders. Is the boy prepared for that?"

Was he prepared for that? Qin Guan didn't want to discuss the topic any further. He and Xu left as fast as they could in an effort to avoid more attention. Before they could get out of the stadium

though, people started chasing them from all directions.

They were sports fans from all over the world who had seen their idol on the large screen. They had been looking at Qin Guan through their binoculars and cameras, so they acted as soon as he left his seat.

More and more fans gathered around him with marker pens and white T-shirts for him to sign. This attracted the attention of the other audience members. Humans tended to follow the current, so everyone else also started taking out pens.

Qin Guan forced his way to the exit, regretting not taking Han Zhujiu with him. When he reached the exit, a pair of large hands pulled him through a side door used by athletes.

"Hey! Qin Guan!" Xu followed him in quickly. The security guards shut the fans out.

We are safe! Before Qin Guan could express his gratitude, he realized that his savior was a kind middle-aged Chinese man.

Chapter 855: Group Photo

Judging by his outfit, he had to be a member of the Chinese team. The logo "Li Ning" made it pretty clear.

"Nice to meet you, Qin Guan."

"Nice to meet you..."

"I'm Zhang, the director of the track team of the Chinese General Sports Administration. I'm not a businessman or a celebrity, so I won't beat about the bush. You've come here especially for Liu Xiang?"

"Yes." Qin Guan nodded in confusion.

"Do you think everyone should pay close attention to and support outstanding athletes? Liu has just made a breakthrough for Asians and broken an international record after all."

"Of course!"

"That's right! Such a sports star needs understanding and help from all fields. As you know, it is hard for athletes to sign contracts with agencies or businessmen. It's said that you have connections both in China and internationally. I was wondering if..."

He was actually afraid of being cheated by businessmen, but this was nothing for Qin Guan.

As a patriot, Qin Guan agreed without hesitation. "I'll give you my phone number. You can ask your staff to contact my assistant. I know everything about most fashion brands. If you choose one, I could contact them for you for free!"

"Great! Thanks a lot." Director Zhang was satisfied with the result. Before Qin Guan could say goodbye to him, a Chinese reporter ran over to them happily.

The reporter shot an excited look at Qin Guan and whispered something to Director Zhang. Zhang nodded repeatedly. Then Qin

Guan was presented with an even more exciting proposal.

"As you know, Liu Xiang has just broken the world record. There is still some time left before the official press conference. Would you like to take a group photo with our athletes?"

"Sure!" Xu Xiaoxiao replied before Qin Guan could. His lifelong dream would finally be realized.

Thus, everyone entered the backstage lounge, where Liu Xiang was excitedly waiting for the press conference to start.

"Come here, Liu Xiang. Let me introduce you two. This is Qin Guan, he is a fan of yours. He came to Lausanne especially for you."

"And who is this gentleman?"

"I'm Xu Xiaoxiao, an American-Chinese loyal fan of yours. You are the pride of Chinese people all over the world!" Xu rushed over to shake Liu's hands.

Liu grinned at them. Who is Qin Guan? Is he a celebrity? I am too busy training every day. Some girls from the women's team mention him from time to time though. He is an award-winning actor! It's great to have such a big star as a fan...

The reporters from the Xinhua News Agency and CCTV frowned at Xu, who was standing in the middle.

"When shall we take the photo, sir? And how?"

"Now! Like this! Make sure we look handsome!"

Xu felt like he was on a cloud as he stood between Qin Guan and Liu Xiang, hugging their shoulders. He looked like a small apple between two tall bananas.

Miserable, yet memorable.

The reporters pressed the shutters as fast as they could and tried to ignore the short guy in the middle. When they were done, they shook hands with Qin Guan and Liu Xiang.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

"Was that okay?"

"Yes, you can get back to your work."

Qin Guan pulled Xu out of the lounge so he wouldn't follow Liu Xiang to the press conference.

Then he returned to his hotel and sent the photos to his firm. To his surprise, the news about Liu Xiang went viral online. By the time he boarded the plane for Spain, the pictures had spread all over the country.

"The No.1 Asian at track races! Liu Xiang breaks the world record with 12.88 seconds and pushes the human limits!"

"Lausanne! Liu Xiang's lucky place!"

"The award-winning actor personally beats the drum for Chinese athletes!"

"Liu Xiang and Qin Guan's friendly photos! The two of them seem to know each other well!"

The strange photos had sneaked into the sports section.

Chapter 856: Spain

Qin Guan was connected to the striking news. All the netizens were shocked. Qin Guan should be at the Spanish film festival. Why did he go to Switzerland? Are you kidding me?

Reporters started refreshing Qin Guan's website and official blog immediately. The latest news were about his trip to Spain. How did the sports reporters get this scoop? They should just stick to Liu Xiang and leave this to us!

Their colleagues had just seen Qin Guan waving his flag fiercely in the stadium. The commentator had been really funny, so CCTV 5 just translated his commentary into Chinese.

"I just found out that Qin Guan, the Golden Globe winner who has also won awards at Cannes and Berlin, is not just a film star, but also a fan of Liu Xiang. As an authentic Swiss, Qin Guan was the only Chinese guy I could recognize. Thanks to him, I now learned about a Chinese athlete that is no less successful than Qin Guan in his own career."

Liu's international status was suddenly elevated. In half an hour, the news had spread across China and the entire world. By the time Qin Guan got off the plane in Spain, his staff had already posted the pictures online. So had the reporters from the Xinhua News Agency and CCTV 5.

Saint Sebastian was a small city on the bay. If it wasn't for the famous European film festival, Chinese people would not even know its name. European people loved it though.

If Spain was considered a heaven for the retired, Saint Sebastian was the heaven of heavens.

The beach there was not like in other resorts. Playa De La Concha was full of sunshine, warmth and elegant historical buildings. The buildings lined the hills along the beach without interruption.

Words couldn't express the beauty of the beach.

There was also another hidden treasure there. Qin Guan only found out what it was when he met Xu Jinglei at the hotel.

It was delicious food.

The city was the gastronomical capital of Spain. The best cooking schools of the country were located there, so it was the cradle of the most renowned cooks in Europe. One could imagine the level of the restaurants there.

As soon as he heard the good news, Qin Guan rushed out of the hotel, leaving the annoying group photo with Liu Xiang behind him.

Some people thought that Qin Guan wanted to share Liu Xiang's popularity, but his fans insisted that it would have been impossible for their idol to know the outcome in advance.

After a heated discussion, both sides fixed their eyes on the fat man in the middle. They hated that lucky guy so much. Fortunately, Xu had returned to America. If looks could kill, the people in China would have murdered him.

Thanks to the group photo, Qin Guan reached the top of the Jiulang blog, surpassing even Xu Jinglei's blog, which included casual essays and personal stories. Although Wang Liying had texted him the good news, Qin Guan couldn't resist the temptation of food.

He had found the most famous local food street by asking the hotel staff. It was a wonderful site. There were only various restaurants and bars along the street.

Even Michelin restaurants were not rare around there. Qin Guan spotted at least three restaurants with Michelin stars within a distance of 30 meters.

Chapter 857: The Quintessence of Spanish Culture

If one didn't have tapas during their visit to Spain, everyone would laugh at them. It would be like coming out of a bank vault with bare hands. Even if they watched the boldest, most unrestrained flamenco dancer, or fought with the most violent bull, that disappointment would still be irreversible.

Tapas were the quintessence of Spanish food. They could be found everywhere, from gorgeous restaurants to small cafés.

There were two completely different stories about them in Spanish legends.

The noblest one was that an ancient Spanish king had bad a big appetite and disliked European dinner, but preferred simple snacks instead. Thus, the royal cook had made him small dishes of different tastes that could stimulate his appetite. The king had been really happy when he'd tried them.

There was also a more realistic legend. Back in the era when carriages had been widely used, tired passengers and cart drivers had had no time to sit down and enjoy a good meal. They had usually stood at the entrance of restaurants or by their carts and eaten dry loaves of bread in a hurry. Thus, some smart restaurant owners had divided larger portions of food into smaller ones and sold them to those people so they could save time. That was the origin of tapas.

The legends always talked about their good taste though.

Qin Guan entered a restaurant by following his foodie intuition. A crowded restaurant had to be a good one.

There were 50 different kinds of food sitting on the tall tables with toothpicks on them. They seemed to be crying, "Don't eat me! Don't eat me!" They looked lovely.

Qin Guan walked over to them with a giant white plate in his hands. Tiny Vienna sausages were wrapped in Spanish rye bread, creating rolls that were smaller than ping-pong balls.

The half-boiled eggs with orange caviar looked like tiny suns. There were several small fried chicken legs behind them. White smooth fish was stuffed into red bell peppers. There were also various barbecued vegetables. One could even ask the cook to grill some pineapples and cucumbers.

If someone thought they were too rich and elegant for these plain ingredients though, the seafood would satisfy them.

King crab meat had been peeled off and mounted on plates, and light, delicious truffles were waiting in large bowls. There was also tuna that had been caught that very morning in the bay. The cook had cleaned it and cut it into pieces.

One could take anything they liked and enjoy their food slowly. There was a label on each toothpick, so the waiter would look at it before the customer paid.

One toothpick cost one to two euros, and about five dishes could usually satisfy a girl. Of course, this wasn't enough for Qin Guan. When he had finally dined and wined to satiety, it took the waiter a full five minutes to count his toothpicks. Wang Liying wished the floor would open up and swallow her.

Qin Guan had eaten enough food for three adults. The waiter, who was not that good at math, felt completely lost as he counted the toothpicks.

53, 52, 53...

"You have 53 toothpicks, sir. That's... 53 euros. Thank you."

That sounds strange.

Wang paid the bill quickly and pulled Qin Guan away from the tables. They left the Spanish restaurant without hesitation. If they spent any more time there, Qin Guan would try everything and die

from food overdose before the film festival even opened.

That was why he needed a reliable agent. Xue Wanyi had found the perfect successor.

In July, the sunshine looked like splendid gold in Spain. The White Shell Bay was really beautiful. Although the Saint Sebastian Festival was not as influential as the other three famous European film festivals, it had a history of more than 50 years, so it was still very important among the small European film circle.

It also showed a preference to Chinese films. In 1994, Ning Jing had won the Best Actress Award there. That was why Xu Jinglei was so confident about her work.

Chapter 858: The Silver Shell Awards And Young Chinese Actresses

The White Shell Bay certainly deserved the title of the most beautiful bay in Europe. The beautiful landscape alone could provide the media with enough pictures, not even counting the stars on the red carpet.

Qin Guan would be attending the ceremony to satisfy the reporters.

Thus, he became the protagonist of the entire ceremony. All the reporters gathered around the miraculous Asian man. The local government welcomed the international award-winning actor, as his presence would elevate the influence of the festival.

The festival was actually only famous in Europe. Besides filmmakers, not that many people in the world knew about it. The local media had already drafted the next day's headlines.

"Ten years later, a Chinese actor shows his extraordinary talent and wins the Best Actor Award again!"

"A touching film and a delicate oriental perspective..."

"Qin Guan wins another European award after Cannes and Berlin!"

According to their confident predictions, Qin Guan would be the winner. They knew that, just like other European film festivals, this one also favored Asian films. Plus, Qin Guan enjoyed international fame, so it would only be natural for him to win.

As expected, "Letter From An Unknown Woman" was the big winner of the night. Xu won her first international directing award, and the film also won the Best Screenplay and Best Actor Award.

The Silver Shell was handed out to the entire crew. This was a

big honor for the Chinese woman.

From then on, Xu would focus on her work as a director instead of an actress. It was very seldom that an actress retired from the public eye to engage in hard directing work, but the experience was like a clear stream that had refreshed her.

Xu had been one of the top four actresses in China, so her retirement from acting affected the structure of the entire film circle.

After years of work, Fan Pingping and Li Bingbing had finally reached the top of the circle. All flowers bloomed together on the mainland.

However, Fan was suffering from a lack of popular films. Li Bingbing, who was an older actress, had already acted in some popular films that had impressed the audience. "The Knot" had been praised by critics and topped the box office by beating other mainstream films.

Meanwhile, Fan was just famous for her affairs. She was anxiously seeking for resources with her agent, but it was in vain. All the feedback was negative.

She had actually been labelled a "brainless beauty". Although she had become a beauty standard of the era, she had also suffered because of it.

She parked outside Qin Guan's office slowly, took off her sunglasses and got out of the car.

As soon as she went out, she saw a figure and felt a very strong sense of *deja vu*. A slender woman was opening the door of a black Land Rover. The big car created a strong contrast against the pretty woman, but Fang thought that her imposing manner matched the car well.

Who is she?

With a flash of inspiration, Fan recalled her name. She called Qin

Guan right away.

"Fan Pingping? Are you downstairs?"

"Yes, how did you know? I just saw Cong Nianwei."

"Wow! Your memory is really good! Did you know her back in high school?"

Qin Guan was really proud of his girlfriend's popularity. Fan suddenly pulled him back to reality.

"No, I just recognized her from the photos published by the media. I don't remember any boys from school, let alone any girls. Anyway, I'm at the entrance. Send your assistant down to open the door for me!"

Chapter 859: People Are Not Equal

In order to reach Qin Guan's office, one had to go through a lot of check points. These had been built to prevent fans and reporters from breaking in. Rongzhi had transformed the simple building into a castle with cards and codes.

Wang Liying led Fan Pingping and her team to a private meeting room where Qin Guan always read scripts and enjoyed his afternoon tea.

Fan felt right at home in the meeting room. She asked Qin Guan to prepare some snacks and tea for her and then stated the purpose of her visit.

"Could you please give me a chance? We come from the same town after all. Is there a script that's suitable for me? I want to be a protagonist."

Her eagerness confused Qin Guan. In his opinion, the girl was in the prime of her life. Everyone knew her. Qin Guan fixed his eyes on her and asked, "Isn't this your agent's job? Why did you come to me? I cannot intervene when it comes to company functions. There is an appointed CEO at Huayi. I think you'd better ask help from the person in charge of the scripts."

"Yes! Yes, I know!" Fang put her palms together devoutly. "I didn't find any suitable scripts at Huayi, but I know you have a lot of resources. Is there perhaps a script that you turned down? Just give me a recommendation!"

Everyone knew that Qin Guan maintained a good relationship with both the sixth and the fifth generation of directors. He had also cooperated with CCTV and China Film Group, so mainstream directors thought just as highly of him.

Qin Guan turned down dozens of scripts a month. Everyone in the entertainment circle called him a lucky boy, just like people in

America had called him a lucky star.

Qin Guan could read her thoughts. She just wanted to share his good luck. He turned and pointed to a shelf.

"TV scripts on the left, film scripts on the right. They are all labelled by date. If you are interested in something, just call my assistant." Actually, a script was only the first step. The director would evaluate many aspects before choosing an actor.

"That simple?"

Fan felt as if she was at the top of the world. As she rushed over to the shelf, Qin Guan took a sip of the green tea in his hand.

Not all people were equal. Fan was busy running about looking for a script while Qin Guan just sat on the couch and enjoyed his tea. A lot of people still stuffed scripts in his hands whenever he walked by them.

I have to accept the reality that he is a miracle. The actress got lost in a script.

"Huh? Did you read this one, Qin Guan?"

"Which one?"

"'Apple'? Tony Leung will be the protagonist, but the heroine has not been cast. It's a story about a nobody suffering from mishaps his entire life because of the fast development of the economy. I think it's a profound story. It stands a good chance of winning an award. Why did you turn it down?"

There was a red cross on the cover of the script, which had been lying on the shelf, covered in dust.

Qin Guan didn't even move his eyelids. The script had impressed him. It was pretty good, but it was not of any mainstream value. Qin Guan had to avoid scripts of that kind if he wanted to stay out of trouble.

He looked at Fan, who was observing his expression carefully.

"If you choose this one, you have to prepare yourself mentally. There are erotic scenes included, and the heroine is not a nice person. She is just a material girl. It would be a test for your acting skills though. That's why Tony Leung agreed to it. If you want to have a signature film, this would be a good choice."

Reassured, Fan put the script in her bag with satisfaction.

Chapter 860: The Importance Of The Ornamental Column Awards

She suddenly noticed the script in Qin Guan's hands. Fan Pingping walked closer to him. "What's this? You're reading it so carefully."

"Director Li An sent it to me. It's quite controversial. I'm still hesitant about it."

"What is it? Let me take a look."

Qin Guan handed the script over. The title on it was "Lust Caution".

Unlike all the characters he had portrayed before, this one was a traitor, the ultimate villain. Qin Guan was hesitant because he was afraid the SARFT might get upset.

Fan changed his mind though.

"An actor like you can do anything without regrets. A good script comes to you by luck, not by searching for it. You can pick and choose from many though! You can try all kinds of roles. I'm going to go mad!"

She is right. I have never portrayed such a villain. One should be open to challenges. If I get in trouble for this film, I could find work in America and wait for the storm to subside. That's what I'll do!

Qin Guan felt determined. After escorting Fan out, who was still feeling reluctant about her own script, he told Wang to arrange his upcoming work schedule. He would talk about the details with Director Li An before the Ornamental Column Awards. If he rejected such a chance again, the director might not give him another one in the future.

Qin Guan contacted Qu and asked her to get more foreign scripts,

just in case.

As award ceremonies were coming up one after the other, Qin Guan calmed down from his previous excitement. A possible award might please him, considering that he had not been very passionate lately.

Attending ceremonies became a routine for him. A train rarely experienced any surprises when it followed the tracks. There was an obscure feeling at the bottom of his heart reminding him of his own ambition and long-term goals.

He would not rest until he won an Oscar. Thus, Qin Guan decided to try to realize his dream. Feature films were still popular at the Oscars after all.

Qin Guan stomped confidently on the red carpet of the Ornamental Column Awards in his most solemn suit.

Unlike the Golden Chicken and Hundred Flowers Awards, the Ornamental Column Awards were very serious. Their original name had been "Excellent Government Film Awards". Such an award was an honor bestowed by the government, so all the films selected for the next round focused on ideology and art, instead of on succeeding at the box office, selling DVD copies and making their money back.

The award was a miniature of the real ornamental column on Tienanmen Square, which indicated its political significance.

That award was a certificate of quality.

Although it was the most popular one among ordinary people, it was definitely the most important award for the Chinese cultural industry. As a result, all the nominated actors attended the ceremony. No one dared to be absent, for fear that the directors of the Ministry of Culture would attend the event and get a bad impression of them.

Yin Changtao had designed a custom traditional Chinese suit for

Qin Guan, which was even better than an Armani suit. Giorgio Armani had showed great interest in the outfit, as this was the first time Qin Guan had declined to wear Armani at a formal event.

It was a Chinese tunic suit with an open collar and fitting pant legs that revealed Qin Guan's perfect figure. He looked extraordinary amid the crowd on the red carpet.

There were also some international stars coming from far away, including Zhou Yun, Zhang Ziyi, Jet Li and Leon Lai, who had to remind the officials of their existence.

They attracted the attention of the media, upstaging older hard-working actors.

Before Qin Guan could take a seat, he saw Feng Gong grin at him. He shared a bitter hatred with him over a common enemy.

Chapter 861: Confidence

"Have you had a meal?"

"Yes."

"What about you? They didn't take pictures of you for a long time either?"

Actually, Qin Guan had been the focus of the cameras, but he replied against his will, "Yes, I was done with the red carpet fast. They didn't pay much attention to me."

"Exactly!" Feng Gong patted the arm of his chair. "They only photographed a handsome man like me for 30 seconds and then told me to keep walking!"

You must have been blocking someone else.

"It looks like we are partners in misery..."

Thank you so much...

The two of them talked happily. The first three rows of seats were filled fast. Officials from the Ministry of Culture and other film industries were sitting in the first row, and famous mainstream directors and producers occupied the next two rows. When they were all seated, silence slowly prevailed in the hall. No one wanted to make a bad impression on those guys.

Thus, the main hall of the Beijing Exhibition Center was as silent as a grave.

The nervous atmosphere was eased by the rising of the curtain. Qin Guan felt like he was not at an award ceremony, but a film circle auction. Everyone used this event as an opportunity to market themselves.

Fan Pingping was the event's guest of honor. Director Chen Kexin was standing next to her.

"I like Director Chen's work. I hope he could give me a chance in

the future."

Chen Kexin forced a smile at the meaningful expression in the audience's eyes and changed the topic.

"The Best Actress of the 12th award ceremony is... Li Bingbing!"

The honest girl had finally succeeded after so much effort. She had already left her opponent Xu Ruoxuan far behind.

People had originally considered Fan the cleverest person at the ceremony, but a second guest of honor made them change their minds.

Zhao Wei, who had used to be a big-shot on the Chinese mainland, was not as confident as Li Bingbing now. Her terrible line delivery and typecasting made her struggle in her career. As she was standing on the stage with kung fu superstar Jet Li, she wanted to struck a couple of poses. She wanted to show that she was also good at martial arts, even though she was wearing a formal dress.

She just wanted to give him this information with the prospect of cooperating with him in the future.

Unfortunately, Jet Li was not as polite as Chen Kexin. He only talked about One Foundation. While he was on the stage, he kept asking everyone to donate money to charity.

He understood Zhao Wei's eagerness though. She just wanted to dip her feet in the river and take advantage of his influence in Hollywood.

The straightforward man gave her a perfunctory response. "I'm just an actor, I'm not a director or a producer. I do not cast actors for films."

Only this confident man would dare say no to the popular actress.

"Okay, we'll talk about this later. Now let's focus on tonight's real

heroes. The nominated actors of the 12th award ceremony are Wang Wufu, Feng Gong, Fu Dalong and Qin Guan."

"The lucky guys are Fu Dalong and Qin Guan! Let's give them a round of applause!"

Another double-yolked egg! Two out of the four candidates had won an award.

Qin Guan got on the stage. Unlike the previous winners, he expressed his sincere appreciation for everyone involved in the film. It seemed like he was clear about the situation. It was the government that had given him this chance. During previous ceremonies, he had mentioned his girlfriend repeatedly, but he remained silent about her this time.

After his speech, he stepped back behind the host and the guests of honor and listened to the other actor's speech humbly.

He stayed like this until he got off the stage. He remained shy and silent as he walked past the first three rows.

What excellent acting skills! Qin Guan didn't need to flatter the directors. He had a shelf of scripts in his office. Plus, he was a producer himself! He could produce his own films if he wished.

He also won awards for the film he had produced. "Crazy Stone" won the Best Film Award and Ning Hao won the Best New Director Award. For a film with a budget of only 4.5 million, this was no disappointment.

Everyone used the Ornamental Column Awards to ensure future box office success.

Chapter 862: Replacing Older Actors

Qin Guan was quite confident about "Crazy Stone". Reassured by the Ornamental Column Awards, he tried to increase the box office even more.

I am an actor who doesn't need help from others, I don't need to promote myself shamelessly during the ceremony. Being a quiet, handsome guy works better for me. People will think of me as a noble hermit.

He was right. His presence during the ceremony earned unanimous praise both in terms of acting skills and social behavior.

The experienced directors, who judged an actor based on their initial impression, had loved Qin Guan.

They thought he was a peaceful boy that concentrated on his acting skills every day, but was not that good at being sociable.

The producers thought Qin Guan spent too much time in the business circle and didn't care about the complicated affairs of the entertainment circle. He could just as well work for his firm and turn down their money.

They still liked the actor though, because he paid no attention to fortune or fame.

Qin Guan contacted Director Zhang and headed to the Hengdian base again.

The film industry was developing slowly. A lot of people made a living on it. The film base in Hengdian was the best one in the industry. It spent a lot on promotion and tried its best to help film crews, so it had become the first choice for any independent film shooting. One could find everything they needed there, including labor workers, figurants and other professionals.

As the film industry in Hong Kong and Taiwan suffered,

Hengdian in the Zhejiang Province was flourishing.

Qin Guan joined the crew early. Zhang Yimou had to compete against Chen Kaige during the next year, so he had decided to be really careful about his work.

When Qin Guan arrived, that day's scenes had already been finished. The basic structure of the imperial palace was a copy of the palace in "Emperor Han Wu".

Zhang Yimou was concentrated on beating his opponent. According to reliable resources, Qin Guan had been involved in a lawsuit between Chen and the local government of Yunnan Province. Thus, as soon as Qin Guan reached Hengdian, Zhang talked with him about his character and asked him about the details of the case.

As a dedicated actor, Qin Guan didn't have any problems with his role. When they finished their discussion about it, Zhang began beating about the bush.

Qin Guan smiled. "What do you want to know, sir? I will speak without reserve."

"I heard that you and Jiang Wen saw the situation at Tianchi. Tell me about that."

Qin Guan became serious. "It looks the same as in the pictures. Jiang Wen and I happened to be around when the locals negotiated with the crew. They didn't have a smooth discussion. I just got a general idea about the situation and provided them with some legal service. I also donated a sum of money to the local villages so they could restore the environment to its original state and make up for their loss in tourism."

"If Chen paid them for the damages, they would be happier though. Plus, it would also save me some money."

Director Zhang fell silent. He was a director who maintained a good relationship with the government, so he had his own

baseline. What Qin Guan had done had helped him. The more the audience disliked "The Promise", the more popular his own film would be. The two films would be in theaters during the same period after all.

Zhang suddenly recalled that Qin Guan had turned down offers from some fur brands and patted his shoulder approvingly.

These days, kind people were harder to come by, let alone rich kind people. He hoped Qin Guan would stay on the right track.

The two of them had a pleasant talk. Some people felt unhappy about the importance the director attached to Qin Guan though. Younger actors succeeded older ones. The rising young man put great pressure on older actors, who saw the prime of their careers slip by.

Among the main actors, Gong Lee and Chow Yun-Fat were the best. The other two actors were Ni Dahong, who was aloof from his recent international success, and Jay Chou, who was a greenhand.

The cause of the uncomfortable feeling in Chow's heart was clear.

His value in Hollywood used to be 12 million dollars, but his box office record had been really low. Eventually, he had experienced a box office flop and ended up unemployed.

Meanwhile, Qin Guan had started out as a figurant with a salary of 10 dollars per hour and become a star worth dozens of millions. After "The Da Vinci Code", he had really stood out among other actors. Now agencies and famous directors were all after him.

The difference between the two actors was a few decades. Chow had suffered both ups and downs, while Qin Guan had risen all the way to the top. There was a huge gap between them!

Chapter 863: Two Award-Winning Actors

It was like a bug in his shoes. Chow Yun-Fat was eager to meet the young actor and experience his charm first hand. Hollywood was crazy about him after all.

It was a rare sunny day, so the royal palace looked splendid in the sunshine. Actually, it looked like a yellow palace. Its red carpet had a golden, cloudy pattern, and all the walls were covered in golden silk, except for the red wooden frames. Even the windows with the hollowed-out designs had golden leaves pasted on them.

All the props and decorations were gold, including the lanterns, the maids' hats and the tableware. The palace had been built by 3,000 workers, but the crew's need for golden props could only be met by a small wholesale market in Yiwu, China.

Before Qin Guan could look at the dazzling hall carefully, he suddenly saw his costume and almost fainted.

As the eldest prince of the empire, he would be living in that splendid palace. His robe was the same color as the palace. Thanks to the absence of light cyan as a background color, he would look like a moving gold ingot.

The dominant hue of the film was gold, which was the favorite color of rich people all over the world.

Qin Guan didn't agree with the aesthetic approach of the film, so he focused on his performance instead.

The first scene of the film revolved around him and Gong Lee.

The emperor had returned to his country with his troops, frightening his eldest son, who had committed adultery with his stepmother three years ago.

The empress had heard from her son that his eldest brother would be returning to Qingzhou to get rid of this unhealthy love. This was the first real conflict of the film. All the cameras were

locked on their faces, which set very high standards for one's acting skills.

The short scene, which would last only two minutes, attracted all the leading actors. This would be the first cooperation between the international award-winning actor and actress. It would be a splendid clash of talent.

Thus, Qin Guan began acting with Gong Lee amid the crowd.

Gong Lee entered the palace of her stepson angrily. She was furious at the coward.

Meanwhile, Qin Guan had been cultivating his spirit with his eyes closed. Even his golden crown and robe couldn't outshine his charm.

When he saw the empress clearly, the awkward expression on his face shocked the audience. Qin Guan was great at expressing emotions, so everyone could sense what he felt.

Gong Lee took action. She was the best actress in China after all. Frowning, she grabbed Qin Guan's sleeves angrily and pressed her cheek against his jaw. The two of them were lovers after all. Their each movement and expression were textbook. It was a feast of acting skills, as well as a competition between the two actors.

An ordinary actor would have surrendered to her vigor, but Qin Guan only turned his face sideways to hide in the dark. He was rejecting his stepmother.

"Father is coming back. I'm his son, and you are my mother after all."

He stated his purpose clearly. He wanted to put an end to their immoral love.

"I'm not your mother. This is not a dead end."

Despite Qin Guan's rejection, Gong didn't leave. Instead, she moved her hands back and stood up straight. At that moment, she

was not a woman in love, but the most powerful empress in the world.

"Let's go welcome your Father first." She turned around and left without hesitation.

"Good! Cut!"

The first scene was over.

Director Zhang Yimou didn't make any comments. Those two actors did not need his guidance. He had to pay close attention to another actor instead.

That actor was Jay Chou, who had been selected among the top 10 most influential guys in Asia by "The Times" in 2005. The talented young musician had no experience in film. If it hadn't been for the sponsors from Taiwan and Zhang's high expectations for the international box office, they would never have cast such a greenhand for a big-budget film.

Nevertheless, Chou was very eager to act in the film. He had even hired a martial arts trainer a few months earlier especially for the film, so the boy had his good points as well.

Chapter 864: Bathing

The wonderful acrobatic action scenes would make up for his raw acting skills. His character in the film was a man of prowess, not a guy with a complicated mind like Qin Guan's. His main task was to just shoot the action scenes well.

The hard-working young man performed as Director Zhang had expected. He didn't have the expressiveness of a professional actor, but he performed martial arts with a good poker face, which surprised Qin Guan.

The man had been criticized for his lack of acting skills, but he did all his stunts himself. He didn't ask to use a body double.

Most actors had no reason to laugh at him considering this advantage.

Gong Lee seemed to notice Qin Guan's confusion. After a few scenes, the crew took a break and she explained, "The Taiwanese boy joined the crew early, before the palace was even built. The prop team provided him with large wooden blades so he could practice. By the time filming began, he'd already broken more than 100 blades. No one would blame him for a couple of mistakes. A hard-working guy is welcome everywhere, right?"

Qin Guan forced a smile. It seems that you think I'm not a hard-working guy. Actually, Qin Guan was feeling jealous.

Even though he was a lucky man, he still envied the boy, who was fighting fiercely with Chow. Although he was hanging from a wire, he didn't seem to have any trouble repeating simple movements.

The boy seems to love acting.

Unfortunately, there were also daily-life scenes included in the script. Soon, Qin Guan got a chance to witness Chou's misfortune, as the man would have to take a bath in the palace. This was the

first time Qin Guan would be watching someone else bathe.

The crew scattered flower petals in the bathing pool, where the water was still steaming hot.

Chou, who was wearing just a pair of white shorts, was looking at Qin Guan and playing with the petals happily. He forced a smile at Qin Guan and received a meaningful look in reply.

"What's the matter, Brother Qin?" Chow's small eyes narrowed into cracks.

"Look behind you. They are fighting."

Chou turned around and saw what he meant.

The figurants usually acted just as a background. They only got 20 yuan and two meals per day.

Some good-looking ones got a chance to show their faces in the frame. Those got paid 30 yuan and played a bigger part in the film. It was a miracle for common people.

The luckiest ones were those selected by the assistant directors. Those actors could even get a chance to appear in the same frame with leading actors and have a simple action or line to deliver. This was like a pie fallen from heaven for them.

Based on the importance of their job, they were usually paid 100 to 150 yuan per day.

The fight was taking place between a group of maids, who were fighting for a chance to stand by the bathing pool while Chou was inside. They were fighting fiercely, yet they also had to be careful not to ruin their makeup or tear their costumes. It was a really funny scene to watch. Qin Guan couldn't help but burst into laughter.

Chou unconsciously caressed the upper part of his naked body. The greedy eyes of the girls made him shiver. Believe me, it is not a wonderful feeling to have girls watch you bathe!

When four of the maids finally won the fight, Chou buried his body deeper under the petals. The greenhand was really shy. Qin Guan, who was a veteran, had showed his naked butt in a film lots of times.

Before Chou could get over his embarrassment, Qin Guan patted him on the shoulder.

"Good boy! Well done!"

Then he laughed and left proudly.

Zhang Yimou shook his head helplessly. He was really curious about what Jiang Wen had done to Qin Guan. Why is he so kind to stark naked people?

The next day, they shot the first group scene. All the main actors showed up for their first gathering. As the exclusive imperial physician, Ni Dahong was also there.

The yard around the palace was full of yellow chrysanthemums they had bought from Yiwu markets. They were everywhere in the nearly 1,000-square-meter yard.

Chapter 865: Wild Girls

There was a large square table on the high, round terrace, which followed the traditional Chinese concept of "orbicular sky and rectangular earth". The group scene would take place on that terrace, so cameras had been placed at its corners.

At the director's signal, Chow Yun-Fat began performing. He was the king who reigned over the kingdom and all the people in it.

"What's the matter with you?"

Chow shot a disdainful look at Qin Guan. Although Qin Guan was his successor, he was still the worst among the three princes.

Qin Guan unconsciously lowered his head and shoulders. He felt great pressure under the mighty emperor's gaze.

He muttered his proposal under his breath, "I want to guard Qinzhou City. Can Your Majesty promise me that, Father?"

Ho ho! Guard Qinzhou City? You want to take all my military power out of my hands? Not while I'm still alive!

Actually, Chow was reading too much into this. Qin Guan was a coward, so that was not his intention at all. He just wanted to escape from his aggressive stepmother. Unfortunately, his father would never allow that.

When his suggestion was rejected, Qin Guan grimaced awkwardly and went back to his seat silently. His two brothers were not surprised. Their useless eldest brother held no power within the family.

The short scene implied that there was an ongoing secret war within the royal family. Everyone on the terrace felt sad. The family dinner went on in silence.

"Good!"

The scene ended with a close-up of Gong Lee drinking medicine.

Director Zhang shouted at them from under the terrace.

"Everyone take a break except Qin Guan and Li Man! Change costumes quickly. We'll finish all your short scenes today!"

"Got it!"

Qin Guan was used to such high speed, so he accepted it naturally. The assistant director asked Li Man, who was an 18-year-old girl, "Are you tired? Do you need a 10-minute break?"

The girl shook her head. "No, thanks. I'm okay."

I'm going to cooperate with Qin Guan! I will be his lover! Nothing can stop me!

She would be playing the daughter of Ni Dahong, who took care of the empress' drugs every day. Behind closed doors though, she was the prince's lover. They had fallen in love with each other behind the empress' back.

The girl had started her career as a dancer before she had enrolled at the Central Drama Academy in Beijing. She was only a freshman when she had been selected by Director Zhang to participate in the film. She was really lucky, as this was actually her first job. She would also be meeting her idol there, so she decided to grab this opportunity.

She got ready as fast as she could and sneaked into Qin Guan's palace. When Qin Guan pushed the door open, she lifted her chest tentatively.

She gazed at her lover with a fascinated smile, expressing her love and tenderness through her eyes. Qin Guan, who was a playboy, rushed over to her and caught the ribbons around her waist, pulling Li Man into his embrace.

The whole movement was remarkably smooth. No woman would resist such a romantic gesture.

Everyone was talking about Qin Guan.

"Take a good look at him, Jay. If you learn from him, you could win any woman's heart."

Chou was left speechless by Chow's comments. I'm so annoyed with Jolin Tsai right now. I'll go mad if I hear anything else!

Before he could say anything, Chow suddenly got excited.

"Look! They lay down! Look!"

All the girls around them went crazy and started fighting over the best vantage point to watch the erotic scene. There were about 30 to 40 girls gathered at the entrance.

Qin Guan was lying in bed with Li Man in his arms. One of his hands was caressing the girl's soft shoulder, while the other one was on her lips.

Li opened her mouth gently and caught his finger between her teeth. The maiden's tender lips looked really sexy.

Chapter 866: Good Fortune In Love

"Oh!"

The lovers chuckled in low voices. The air was filled with ambiguous feelings. Li Man's beautiful eyes were fixed on the man as the couple hugged on the bed with a meaning smile.

The curtain dropped, hiding the lovers. The onlookers were itching to take a look behind it.

"Wow! Wonderful! When I was the same age as Qin Guan, I knew nothing about these things."

The scene ended with Chou's final comment. The two actors took off their costumes and got ready for Gong's arrival. She would be coming to catch the adulterers in the act.

The film, which had been adapted from the famous play "Thunder Storm", wouldn't have a happy ending. It was filled with dirty tricks and danger.

Thus, the couple's affair would have an awkward ending. The empress broke into the room aggressively with her maids.

"Her Majesty has come!"

The guards announced her presence a few seconds before she broke in. Then Qin Guan showed everyone his full potential.

He bounced up from the bed naked, covered his body with a robe and hid Li Man. By the time Gong Lee reached his bed, he was still half-naked and his hair was messy.

"What kind of punishment would she get for committing adultery in the palace?"

"Twenty seconds of flogging, a tattoo on the face and expulsion from the palace."

Li Man was trembling as she held her clothes in her embrace.

It was easy for a man to choose between a tender lotus and an aggressive peony. Qin Guan knelt down for Li Man without hesitation.

"It was all my fault. Please spare her."

He is standing up against me for another woman! Gong Lee was hurt by her lover's betrayal. She fixed her eyes on Qin Guan sorrowfully as he tried to avoid her gaze. The huddling man had hurt her feelings deeply.

In the end, she surrendered before her beloved and tried to explain.

"I will spare her, but I won't do it for you. I just want to maintain the stability of the palace before the Double Ninth Festival."

When she saw Qin Guan's doubtful expression, she held her next words back. It was useless to say anything else.

The crowd left the palace slowly. Rattled by the narrow escape, Li Man collapsed on the floor. The girl was a professional actress. The scene was perfect. It was even better than the grand scene on the terrace.

Poker-face Chow was also in the crowd, which made the audience feel strange. He looked out of place in that subtly emotional scene. Could his narrow eyes be hiding his feelings? Or had he just gotten used to putting on a poker face whenever he acted?

Director Zhang tried his best to avoid shooting a close-up of Jay Chou. Could it be some sort of disease?

Doctor Chow didn't give up on the boy though. When Qin Guan and Gong Lee entered the fitting room, they found him trying to help Chou.

"See? Open your eyes when you are excited to show the audience how you feel. Open your eyes!"

Chou stared back with effort, but the gap between his eyelids

remained almost the same...

Both the doctor and the patient felt hopeless.

By then, Qin Guan and Gong Lee had entered the empress' chamber. The empress had made Qin Guan a robe for the family feast of the Double Ninth Festival. It was a royal blue robe embroidered with a large golden chrysanthemum.

In 2006, the hidden implication of that flower had not been discovered yet. It was only a tradition of the festival. Qin Guan had to suppress his laughter as he recited his lines.

Gong Lee spread the long robe to show him. "I made a new robe for you. It's different from the one I made you last year. I added the flower for you..."

Qin Guan was left speechless. "Why?" he asked, pointing at the golden flower.

"For your safety."

"My safety? What the hell are you planning?"

Qin Guan went crazy amid that depressing atmosphere. He destroyed the robe and started fighting with the woman.

Her black hair was let loose as they moved and fell into Qin Guan's hands. It smelled like the woman's fragrance.

The two of them ended up on the floor, their bodies close to each other. They exchanged a glance in silence. Then Qin Guan put his hand on her face.

Chapter 867: An Investing Setback

Their carnal desire was communicated through their eyes. Qin Guan caressed Gong's smooth cheeks with trembling hands.

Even though she was a woman in her 40s, she was still a charming actress. Her skin was fine and soft. Qin Guan's hands lingered on its tender land. Their lips were getting closer and closer. Suddenly, Qin Guan thought of his father and came back to his senses.

This was his father's wife!

He rolled away and crawled on the floor, leaving the lonely woman with the messy hair behind him.

"Good! Cut! How were they?"

When the assistants gestured back at him, Director Zhang made a decision.

"One more scene, okay?"

It was wonderful to work with good actors. They were always energetic because they did not have to repeat scenes. Both Qin Guan and Gong Lee answered positively.

They would be shooting another scene in the empress' chamber, but Qin Guan had to change his costume before they did.

Jay Chou took advantage of this to keep practising. He couldn't look inferior to Qin Junyi, who was only 14 years old.

When the prop team was done, the prince rushed back to the chamber angrily with sweat covering his forehead.

"You want to rebel? When?"

"During the banquet."

"You are killing me! No matter if I succeed or not, everyone will question my authority!"

Qin Guan's face twisted in horror, anger and grievance, expressing his tender feelings for the woman. Any other man would have killed her right away, but the coward didn't know what to do. He burst into tears instead.

Qin Guan was a professional actor, so his eyes were like a tap he could turn on whenever he wanted. Tears started running down his face, making him look pitiful.

"You want me to die...I'll die now then!"

He found a dagger in a sewing basket and stabbed his own chest with it without hesitation. At least he had the courage to commit suicide. The blood bag under Qin Guan's clothes broke and blood burst out of his chest as he collapsed on the floor.

Everyone was satisfied with his performance. When the director shouted at them, Gong Lee helped Qin Guan up. There was blood on his face as the crew congratulated the actors on that day's work.

"Everyone is dismissed! Go get some rest at the hotel. Qin Guan, you have some spare time during the next two days."

Actually, most of the actors died by the end of the film.

Qin Guan nodded and rushed back to the hotel. As for Wang Liying, the lawsuit against "The Promise" had already begun.

The crew was still editing and promoting the film. Meanwhile, the news had gone viral online, outshining even "Crazy Stone".

Qin Guan was worried about his first film. Would it survive a fierce battle against Hollywood blockbusters and the pressure back at home?

Ning Hao was disappointed with the film's schedule. China Film Group hadn't helped much. Only a few cinemas in Shanghai would screen the film reluctantly in unpopular time slots.

According to reliable sources, this had something to do with "The Promise". What Qin Guan had done had irritated the producer,

who had consequently tripped "Crazy Stone" up.

Everyone knew that Qin Guan was one of the major shareholders of Huayi, and Tiancheng, which was Huayi's rival, had just set up its headquarters in Shanghai. What a coincidence!

The two enemies had fixed their eyes on "Crazy Stone".

It was difficult to get Qin Guan in trouble, but a film with a limited budget on the other hand...

Qin Guan went crazy when he heard about the first day's box office in Shanghai.

Chapter 868: Earning Great Profits

The first day's box office in more than 10 other cities was 2.9 million yuan in total, while in Shanghai, which had a population of nearly 10 million, the film earned only 15,000 Yuan on its opening day.

What the hell had happened?

Qin Guan's livelihood was on the line. This was so cruel!

Was he going to act like a sitting duck though? Of course not!

After discussing this with his agency, a strategy for the fans in Shanghai was implemented online. Qin Guan's team uploaded a map of the surrounding cities, local cinemas and public transportation routes. The map also included nearby restaurants and coffee bars. One could call it a tourist guide for cities around Shanghai.

"Are you worried about waiting in a long line, but still want to buy a ticket? Are you in Shanghai, looking for tickets to the most popular limited-budget film? Please read this and take a short fun trip to watch Qin Guan's film!"

The map included Suzhou, Wuxi, Jiaxing, even Hangzhou, which shocked fans all over the country.

Even though Shanghai was such a big city, only two of its cinemas were showing the film. In other cities, the film's time slots were getting more and more popular, but Shanghai remained completely indifferent.

After standing in a long line for an entire day in vain, the fans had gotten angry. All the booking websites were useless. There was a traffic jam on all the highways and roads around Shanghai on the weekends. There were even posters and slogans about Qin Guan on a few cars. These people were all loyal fans of Qin Guan.

They blasted "Hundred Family Surnames" through their

loudspeakers as they headed away from Shanghai happily.

The number of people in down-town Shanghai decreased significantly. Some reporters were even waiting for the fans to come back with news.

This was not just a simple problem of the entertainment circle. People's livelihoods were in danger all over the country. The business would suffer a great loss.

Meanwhile, more and more people fell in love with the film's black humor and twists. The film received public praise online. Both Qin Guan's fans and curious common people went to the cinema to watch it. Only famous films stood the test of time. By the time Qin Guan finished his work with Director Zhang, the film had an outstanding box office of 48.8 million Yuan, which meant that it had earned back 10 times its budget.

If one subtracted the share of the cinemas and distribution agencies, as well as the initial investment, Qin Guan had earned a net profit of nearly 10 million. He certainly deserved his Lucky Boy title.

Meanwhile, Chen Hong was preparing for the lawsuit. She had gone too far for "The Promise" by using improper means. The simple problem had become more complicated because of her.

Everything had gotten out of control. Her friends in Shanghai were angry and they needed an outlet.

Tiancheng had fallen silent, so Chen had to go to court alone. People refused to give up until all hope was gone. Everyone hoped that she would be more honest in the future.

Director Zhang was happy to hear the news. The whole crew was pleased, so Qin Guan's final scene was finished in a harmonious atmosphere.

The scene depicted the bursting point of hostility among brothers, father and sons, as well as husband and wife. Of course,

Jay Chou was not included. He was a greenhand, so it would be better for him to stay in shallow waters. His job was just to destroy the palace with his troops after everyone else's story had ended.

The royal family began its weapon-less battle in the small hall.

Qin Guan had committed suicide earlier. He had escaped death narrowly, but he was still weak, so he was lying in an armchair, his face and lips looking pale as he panted. There were blood stains on the bandages around his chest.

Chapter 869: Visiting The Research Institute

As the crown prince, Qin Guan had to attend the ceremony, so he managed to get himself to the hall.

A few pleasant hours flew past. As the emperor and empress were fighting with hatred, Qin Guan felt a sword impale his body from the back.

It was his youngest brother, Qin Junyi. The boy was only 14 years old, yet he had killed his eldest brother while he had been lying still in an armchair.

Blood poured out of Qin Guan's mouth without a word or movement. The prince collapsed, turning his scared face towards the camera.

What happened next had nothing to do with him. Gong Lee rushed over to Qin Guan with dishevelled hair, her face twisted in sorrow. This was the last hour of his life, so she hugged him with all her strength.

Qin Guan was looking at the ceiling blankly as he confessed to the woman, "Sorry, it was all my fault."

Then he died in peace.

Qin Guan let out a long sigh of relief. He thought he had finished his job successfully, when suddenly his head was thrown back, colliding hard against the ground. He had to remain still and elegant throughout everything.

The shot lasted a full five seconds. When Gong Lee left, the corpse got up to leave with the other figurants.

Director Zhang shouted at him angrily, "Qin Guan! What the hell are you doing? Lie back down!"

"Why? I finished my scene. I want to go get my bonus."

"Nonsense! The empress has grieved for you, but the emperor hasn't. Your corpse can still be of use."

Will everyone take turns grieving for the martyr prince?

"See it through to the end!"

Thus, after a short break, Qin Guan resumed his strange pose and lay down on the ground again.

"Attention! This is Qin Guan's final scene. Let's do our best!"

Hey, everyone's gone except for Chow Yun-Fat!

Chow was a considerate guy. Qin Guan finished his scene as fast as he could. When he received his big bonus, he smiled like a greedy man.

After one month, the film he had invested so much in was finally finished. Just like with all his other movies, Qin Guan couldn't wait for the celebratory feast. He had been separated from Cong Nianwei for a long time, and Nicholas Tse, his good friend from Hong Kong, was going to get married soon.

It seemed like his advice had not worked. All Qin Guan could do was send the couple his sincerest blessings. Thus, Qin Guan left the crew without feeling any guilt and got his butt kicked by Zhang Weiping.

Qin Guan didn't tell Cong Nianwei about his return because he wanted to surprise her. After taking a short break at home, he drove his Cadillac to Cong Nianwei's working place, the Chinese Academy of Design and Research.

As a traditional institute, the academy had a dwelling district for the staff. Its lawns and trees made it look like a beautiful park.

After checking in at the entrance, Qin Guan drove to the building where Cong Nianwei worked. There was a bouquet of lilies in the backseat of his car. The tender petals were trembling as the car moved.

Qin Guan had decided to give Cong Nianwei a romantic surprise. He was afraid that their love would fade with distance, which was pretty common in the entertainment and business circle. Qin Guan was too careful to make such a stupid mistake though. No woman could resist a flower bouquet and a handsome man.

Chapter 870: Never Show Off On A Construction Site

Qin Guan was looking forward to the romantic scene. Cong Nianwei would rush over to him, all flushed and happy.

He parked the car in the parking lot and smiled like stupid as he got out.

"Qin Guan?" a man called his name from behind him.

He turned around and saw a thin old man with brown glasses. The old man was Cong Nianwei's university professor, the very one who had suggested that she go study abroad.

The professor was Cong Nianwei's career guide and a very kind educator. He was familiar with Qin Guan, as he was his student's boyfriend.

"Yes, it's me. How are you, professor? I'm looking for Cong Nianwei."

"Didn't she tell you that her team would be on a construction site?"

"What? I just returned from Zhejiang. She didn't tell me anything about that."

The professor shot a curious glance into the car and saw the bouquet.

Is this a romantic surprise? Tough luck! She is not here!

The professor, who was a considerate man, told Qin Guan where to find his girlfriend.

"The Olympic Park will be built on the North 4th Ring Road. You should go look for her over there."

Everyone likes me! But I already knew that!

Pleased, Qin Guan picked out a flower from the bouquet and

handed it to the professor.

"Thank you so much! We'll drop by your home and visit someday. I'm too busy to buy you a gift today. I got something for Shanshan in Zhejiang."

Shanshan was the professor's youngest daughter. She was only 17 years old and she was a fan of Qin Guan's.

Qin Guan returned to his car and waved at the professor, who was looking at the flower blankly. Then he got in the car and drove away.

"Young man..." The old man shook his head. This was the first flower he had received in his life.

Qin Guan was driving at full speed on the North 4th Ring Road. The real estate prices along the way had been sky-rocketing ever since the Olympic stadium had been built.

Qin Guan unconsciously slowed down.

Wow! This area is pretty good. Deluxe high-rise apartments... 20,000 Yuan... Large houses... Still under construction...

Qin Guan was completely distracted.

Soon, he reached his destination. There was a simple blue-and-white wall around the construction site. Qin Guan drove directly into the site through the only entrance.

It was a scene he had been really familiar with in his previous life. He pulled his car up to the temporary parking area smoothly. Thanks to his acute intuition, Qin Guan found Cong Nianwei easily.

Her team was talking about the blueprint with the survey crew and the general engineer. Everyone was wearing yellow helmets and gray uniforms. Qin Guan, who was wearing haute couture, looked completely out of place there.

Yes, he had dressed up for the occasion to impress Cong Nianwei.

His white shirt, tailored British trousers, black leather shoes and shining wristwatch looked extraordinary. His clothes, in combination with the bouquet and his splendid smile, made him look like a royal.

This was the wrong setting though. If it had been a landscape full of lakes and hills, or a bustling street, he would have looked beautiful. This was a construction site though, so he just looked stupid.

Chapter 871: I Love Bargains

Unfortunately, Qin Guan was not aware of that. Cong Nianwei had occupied his mind completely. Grinning, he roared as everyone was looking at him, "Cong Nianwei, I'm back!"

He had to roar, for there were plenty of trucks and machines around. No one would pay attention to his weak voice otherwise. The girl standing next to Cong Nianwei pulled at her sleeve.

"Isn't that your boyfriend? The award-winning actor?"

Yes, that's him. Could I just ignore him? Cong Nianwei let out a sigh, picked up something from a table and walked over to Qin Guan.

"What are you doing here? Put this on!"

It was a red safety helmet. Safety was a priority on construction sites.

"I just wanted to give you a romantic surprise. These flowers are for you!"

Cong Nianwei took the bouquet while Qin Guan put the helmet on. Cong Nianwei did not seem shy or happy, as Qin Guan had expected. Instead, she started lecturing him seriously.

"Next time, ask for a helmet at the entrance. Do you know how many deaths occur on construction sites? You will be the husband of an architect, so you should know all the regulations. Start studying them tonight."

Is this the romantic encounter I was dreaming about?

Qin Guan smiled. "Thank you for your concern, darling. I'll study them carefully to avoid any similar mistakes."

Qin Guan had interrupted the team's conversation, so Cong Nianwei pulled him over guiltily to apologize to everyone. The easy-going head engineer waved at them.

"Don't worry about it. Our meeting was over anyway. We have a hard time on construction sites, but you have contributed a lot. We can have a break in the afternoon. Soon, the project will start and no one will be able to take any time off. Hold on, everyone!"

Everyone had already fled in every direction. Qin Guan drove away happily with Cong Nianwei. Cong Nianwei was really curious about the new car.

"If I knew the company would give you a new car, I wouldn't have bought the Land Rover!" she complained as she looked around her.

"It doesn't matter. It's white, so you can't drive it to construction sites. The Land Rover is better for your job. You can carry all your blueprints and tools in it. Dust and dirt do not show as much on a black car."

So she was going to use a luxury car as a forklift?

Cong Nianwei thought this was reasonable. When she came back to her senses, she realized that Qin Guan was driving in the wrong direction.

"Where are we going? That's not the way home!"

"We are going to buy some houses!"

Qin Guan was a billionaire, so he liked checking out real estate prices. He was an investor though, not a real estate speculator, which made Cong Nianwei happy.

The business street in Wanda Mall was almost complete. When it was ready, Qin Guan would become the richest real estate property owner on the East 2nd Ring.

This was not the first time Qin Guan and Cong Nianwei would be buying a house together. They both made real estate agents nervous.

After his experience on the construction site, Qin Guan looked

dishevelled. There was dirt and dust on his white car and his leather shoes, and his gray suit looked like a dirty cleaning cloth.

His suit was really expensive, yet his female companion was wearing a T-shirt, a vest with dozens of pockets and a pair of overalls. Is she a construction worker? Is she a real-life Cinderella?

They both took a seat and asked to see some houses. The sales ladies recognized the couple right away. The man was the famous actor Qin Guan, so the girl drinking water had to be his official girlfriend!

Chapter 872: Reaching Hong Kong

Sometimes fame was a burden. Stars were also humans with normal, natural desires. No one liked to live in the spotlight.

This was an inevitable result of being famous though. One could choose to retire. There were many stars who had been forgotten by the public. Otherwise, one had to face the media and their fans and act completely at ease around them. People with a conscience were frank with others.

Obviously, Qin Guan belonged in the latter star category. He had created a microblog that reported his activities in real time. One didn't have to write long essays, a few short sentences were enough to attract readers.

Fashion was as popular around the country as Facebook was in America. Qin Guan warned Lan Jin and He Ming, who were still in America, to invest in Facebook. If the website entered the stock market, they would become billionaires overnight.

While Qin Guan was mentally travelling in outer space, Cong Nianwei had picked two houses with the professional help of the sales ladies. They were both on the same floor across from each other. They were also the same size and had the same layout, as well as big beautiful balconies.

If their parents wished to stay in the capital for some time, these houses would be the best choice. The manager didn't waste their time with negotiations. Qin Guan just threw out a golden credit card and his lawyer's business card and then left leisurely. That was how the international award-winning actor dealt with such matters.

The couple was happy with the deal. On the way home, Qin Guan told Cong Nianwei about his next plans.

"Since you have some time off now, will you come to Hong Kong

with me? We could take a short trip to relieve our boredom. Plus, we could also attend Nicholas Tse and Cecilia Cheung's wedding."

"Really? Are they getting married? They've only been together four months!"

"Yes, everyone is surprised. Director Ang Lee also wants to meet you in Hong Kong. Shall we take a sweet trip before your director keeps you hostage on that construction site?"

Cong Nianwei felt embarrassed. The two of them had been in love for eight years, but she kept turning down his marriage proposal. If Qin Guan's joke came true, she wouldn't get married to him before 2008.

Thus, she decided to comfort her boyfriend by going on this trip.

Soon, Wang Liying arranged their schedule, adding the trip to Hong Kong.

Qin Guan reached Hong Kong without notifying anyone. He just wanted to enjoy his girlfriend's company for once.

His plan did not work though. As soon as they checked in at the hotel, a man sneaked into his room with Wang Liying. The man was wearing sunglasses, a cap and a scarf. That outfit in autumn made one stand out instead of blend in.

Qin Guan did not make fun of Tse. He just welcomed the reliable man into his room.

"What are you doing here? You must be busy preparing for your wedding."

"I need your help. Are you familiar with the Philippines?"

No, I'm not.

"I want to book the P island in the Philippines for the ceremony."

"You are such a rich guy. I know you've been earning a lot these past few years, but you spend money like water. Such a ceremony would cost a fortune!"

"I know that, but Cecilia told me this would be her dream wedding. She wants to get married on a beach under the sunshine. No tourists, no reporters, just the two of us. I want to make her dream come true."

Qin Guan held his next words back when he saw Cong Nianwei's face. What was he supposed to say? He would never tell Tse his opinion about his miserable marriage.

Qin Guan was an international award-winning actor, so he was able to help Tse by taking advantage of his various social connections. Then he simply gave up on his original plan and decided to go have dinner with Tse.

Thus, the three of them sneaked away from the hotel.

Chapter 873: Contrast

Their identity made it impossible to appear in the crowded Lan Kwai Fong. Tse chose a Thai hotspot restaurant. In that hot, dry city, it was entertaining to have a private talk in a room with an air conditioner.

People rarely met the right person at the right time. The Thai restaurant was renowned for its authentic tastes. Plus, the owner was good at keeping his mouth shut. A lot of Hong Kong stars were regular patrons there. The restaurant could be considered a holy land of the circle.

Director Ang Lee also happened to show up there, accompanied by a group of friends with gray hair and wrinkled faces. Their graceful upbringing made them seem different from young people.

Ang Lee was the first to recognize Qin Guan and Nicholas Tse. The Los Angeles-based Chinese director was really glad to see them.

"Qin Guan, come over here! Let me introduce you. This is Wong Kar-Wai, Johnnie To..."

Wow! They were all famous directors from Hong Kong!

Despite his current status, Qin Guan still felt like a fish out of water around them. He bowed before them and said hello like a well-behaved schoolboy, explaining why he hadn't contacted Lee as soon as he had arrived in Hong Kong. His guilt made Qin Guan look like a quail surrounded by a group of eagles.

"What? Tse is getting married? Does Albert Yeung from the Emperor Group know?"

"Yes, he does. The invitations must be ready. He is my boss, so he will be getting one."

"Did you make a decision about the role? Listen to me, if you turn it down, I'll go with Tony Leung. Do you know him? He works

exclusively with Wong Kar-Wai. He is steadier than you and more restrained. He is such an elegant man!"

"Do you know why I chose you? For your looks! You seemed like a perfect match for the heroine!"

Qin Guan's ears trembled at his words. Ho ho! Does this mean that...

"The leading actress is very interesting. She is only self-taught. She's neither beautiful nor elegant, but she looks perfect in a cheongsam, which is rare for an actress. Will you do it? Just give me an answer!"

Actually, I wanted to learn more about the heroine... Anyway, it's hard to please everyone. A good role is more important than the SARFT and the Ministry of Culture! Deal!

Qin Guan expressed his faith in Director Lee. This would be a good footnote for his resume.

Satisfied by his response, Ang Lee let Qin Guan go. There was cold sweat on his forehead as he returned to his own booth and told the other men what had transpired.

The dishes were served quickly. The unique scent of Thai food spread around the room. As the host, Tse expressed his admiration to his guests. Actually, he had no signature films in Hong Kong, just like Fan Pingping didn't on the Chinese mainland. In that tiny area, actors were ranked by seniority, so it was difficult to cut in line.

The fame of a second-generation star didn't bring Tse a lot of profit. There were so many big shots out there. Plus, all the successful directors had their own exclusive actors.

Tse was even inferior to Daniel Wu, who had won a few awards for supporting roles.

Tse was usually cool with strangers, but he was a straightforward man with his friends. Qin Guan sent Lee his choice when he joined

the crew. Unfortunately, it was denied.

Ang Lee wanted Qin Guan to play the supporting role of a patriotic youth that wanted to assassinate a traitor. The character matched Qin Guan, who was a cheerful, faithful boy. The director was not satisfied with that though.

That role would be a piece of cake for him. It was so easy that people would think Lee was just a cunning man who wanted to use Qin Guan's fame to his advantage.

The director, who was a perfectionist, wanted Qin Guan to play Mr. Yi, the cunning, heartless traitor.

Thus, Lee selected a tall, bright young man to play the young rebel. It was Leehong Wang, the popular singer that everyone loved.

Tony Leung was not cast after all. A controversial role, a typecast actor, a secret project, a shocking effect... Lee was really interested in this.

Disappointed, Qin Guan called Tse to inform him that the island in the Philippines was ready. It was all thanks to Xie Hanren, a rich businessman from Thailand.

Chapter 874: Style

The businessman had met Qin Guan once in Beverly Hills. He had not only trusted Qin Guan's firm with all his business on the Chinese mainland, but he had also shifted the focus of the whole group to China.

This was just a trifle for the crown prince of the Chia Tai Group.

Of course, he would get something in exchange for the favor. The connection between Qin Guan and him would become stronger. Xie had invited Qin Guan to his home in Thailand. His elder relatives and peers were all interested in meeting the young celebrity.

There was also another underlying reason related to the TV series "Meteor Garden", which had been on TV quite a few years ago.

At the time, the F4 had been completely suppressed by Qin Guan. The Thai princess, who should have fallen in love with Hanazawa Rui, had been fascinated by Qin Guan instead. There were many businessmen in Thailand with good relations with Chinese people, but only Xie Hanren was able to get in touch with Qin Guan.

Although the princess' title held no real weight, she was still a member of the royal family, so it would be a good idea to introduce Qin Guan to her at a formal event.

Of course, Qin Guan had no idea what lay ahead. Going on a trip to Thailand in cold weather would be a pleasurable experience. Xie Hanren didn't consider the princess that important. The two of them just set a date.

Tse and his girlfriend headed to the romantic island after informing Qin Guan about the date of the ceremony. Cong Nianwei's vacation had come to an end, so she returned to Beijing, taking Qin Guan's heart with her.

Qin Guan flew to Shanghai alone with the crew.

Shanghai was renowned for its typical Republic of China scenery. Back in that era, it had been the pearl of the Far East, thanks to its cheongsam, beautiful women, scholars and foreigners. It used to be the most exotic city in old China and the most luxurious place of that era.

One could criticize it for its worship of money, but they couldn't ignore its unique style and elegance.

The word "style" was deeply rooted into the city. The residents there appreciated style even more than money.

To people from Northern China, they seemed really pretentious, but their extreme shallowness was really cute, so in the end they just left them alone.

Ang Lee was a generous man. In order to build the Nanjing East Road, the famous street of his dreams, he had to demolish Stephen Chow's previous set. He rebuilt Paramount perfectly based on old photos. Even the trams could travel around. They were actually real!

The director paid really close attention to detail. Even the boards of the rickshaws shuttling in the background had been copied from relative documents. The secretary's desk in Mr. Yi's office was a real antique from that era.

Qin Guan felt trapped. Ang Lee was the kind of person that scared him the most. He was an extreme perfectionist!

He suddenly heard three ladies calling his name. It was Joan Chen, He Saifei and Tang Wei. Their presence made him travel back decades ago, to a tough yet romantic era.

Joan Chen had cooperated with Qin Guan before, so she introduced the others.

"Come here, Xiao Qin. This is He Saifei. You must know her."

"Hello, Madame He. I like Yang Jiahong very much. You are such a graceful lady!"

No woman could resist such a compliment, no matter how old she was. Plus, the praise was coming from a handsome man! He Saifei felt really happy.

She was an opera actress, so she greeted Qin Guan in a soft tone. Then Chen suddenly pulled Tang Wei closer.

"This is Tang Wei. She will be playing your lover in the film. You are about the same age, but you have more experience in the circle. You should watch over her."

Actually, Tang Wei was two years older than Qin Guan, but she remained an unknown in the circle. If it weren't for Ang Lee's nationwide casting call, she might have wasted the best years of her life and gone back to being an ordinary person, just like other unlucky actresses had. She had been born in 1979 after all, so she was definitely past her prime. A 28-year-old actress without any good films was a failure.

Tang Wei would grasp at this straw and put up a desperate fight though.

Chapter 875: Ridiculous Justice

After several private talks with Ang Lee, Tang Wei decided to follow the man's instructions without any questions or resistance. She dedicated herself completely to this final chance.

Qin Guan was younger than her, but he was still someone she looked up to, so the main actors got to know each other fast.

The early scenes were finished during the run-in process.

Qin Guan was right. Ang Lee was the most horrible perfectionist to ever exist. He paid attention to every detail. For example, when he shot Leehom Wang, who was walking down the stairs with Tang Wei feeling guilty, embarrassed and reluctant, he asked Wang to repeat that simple process 40 times! If one counted the breaks as well, it took the crew about four hours to film that scene!

Maybe I will have to celebrate the Spring Festival here!

Qin Guan was right once again. While they were shut in the studio filming, the famous lawsuit against "The Promise" came to an end. The local government and the Yunnan village got compensated by Chen Hong. The producers, who received a severe warning from the related government department, had to publish a letter of apology and admit their mistake publicly, so that other people would cherish similar non-renewable resources in the future.

When people thought too highly of themselves, they fell into a deep hole they could not get out of. Chen Kang had fought a good fight and returned proudly, while the film crew had been punished to warn others.

Thus, the lawsuit became a part of the film's budget.

This was just a trifle for Qin Guan though. His staff didn't inform him because he was going through a tough time with the crew at the time.

Despite Ang Lee's strict requirements, which slowed the crew down, the shooting went on smoothly. During the earlier stages of the film, Tang Wei didn't share many scenes with Qin Guan. The film just focused on her sacrifice and her rough, childish plan. Although human life had been worthless during that era, this didn't mean that the value of a girl's virginity and the life of a puppet of the Japanese troops could be sacrificed for a righteous cause.

When young people serviced their country, they lost their own personality in the process.

Tang Wei was a poor girl who had lost her virginity in order to become an experienced woman and get a chance to assassinate Mr. Yi. However, the whole farce ended unceremoniously. Mr. Yi didn't even go into her house, because he had to leave for Shanghai immediately.

A woman in their group home persuaded the girl to accept the cruel reality. She wanted to eliminated Wang's possible love for Tang Wei. The fat man was pathetic. He admired Tang secretly, so he didn't agree that she should have sex with that insignificant guy for such a meaningless purpose. In the end though, the coward just washed Tang's blood-stained sheets. He thought he was washing his own sins away by washing her dirty sheets.

That insignificant guy was the worst. He just wanted to have sex with the beautiful girl as compensation for his money. The whole group lived on his financial support, and he had to drive the car around and run other errands for them.

The most disgusting man among them was Leehom Wang, who had betrayed Wang for his own benefit. In his opinion, women had to sacrifice themselves for men's ambitions. Even the girl he loved was just a tool for him to use.

Thus, after killing another so-called traitor, they all fled for their lives. Wang returned to Shanghai to let time cure her wounds.

Unfortunately, three years later, Leehom Wang threatened her and lured her to the boat of the Chongqing Party.

They went on with the assassination in the name of justice.

Wang and Tang had no idea that Qin Guan knew their real identities, so the first erotic scene between Qin Guan and Tang Wei was simple, yet cruel.

While Tang was taking off her stockings, Qin Guan grabbed her hair from behind. He was not a gentleman anymore. He hit her head directly against the wall with a bang. Everyone felt sorry for the girl.

Then, Qin Guan tore off her cheongsam. It was wonderful!

Chapter 876: Not Another Teen Movie

There was a fierce beast in every man's heart that rarely surfaced. Tang aroused the suspicions of Qin Guan, who intended to find out all about her. As a result, he was very cruel with the beautiful spy.

Her legs were suddenly exposed and her underwear landed on the floor.

She was unarmed.

Qin Guan was not satisfied though. She was still his enemy. There was no excuse to let her go.

Tang Wei was pressed against the bed naked. Qin Guan hugged her without hesitation. The two of them had rough, emotionless sex. Tang Wei looked back at Qin Guan with a bitter smile. Her clear, crystal-like eyes revealed the heart of a simple girl.

There were many women lingering around Mr. Yi, but he rarely came across such a stupid one. Her plain gaze attracted him, so he bent down and kissed her lips roughly.

This was the first time Tang had gotten this close to her target, under such violent circumstances.

A man without consciousness was never stopped by desire. He threw a wind coat over Tang's body and left in a hurry. The female assassin hadn't brought any weapons with her. The date had been unexpected, which had actually saved her life.

Ang Lee didn't stop the cameras until Qin Guan had left. The director asked the actors to live the part, not act it out.

His intention should not be misunderstood. The violent fighting had been real, but the sex had not. This was a serious movie after all. It was not a porn film. Desire and acting served only as a background for the actors' emotions.

Despite the fact that the film's title was "Lust, Caution", the director didn't use lust as a weapon. Instead, he focused on the complicated emotional entanglements between humanity, which was exactly what he wanted to express.

During the short break, Qin Guan read silently the lines of the next scene. They were a little... too romantic.

The author of the original work, Zhang Ailing, was a woman who focused on love. Despite the various backgrounds and different characters, her novels were always romantic.

Qin Guan tried his best to hold his laughter back during the next scene.

Tang Wei: I hate you!

Qin Guan: I know! I know!

Tang Wei (hysterically): No! You have no idea!

Qin Guan (sadly): It's not you! You were different three years ago! I only believe our words! It's been a long time since I believed in anyone! You are the only one I trust!

Tang Wei: You must be lonely then.

Qin Guan almost collapsed on the floor from laughter. Ang Lee shouted at him angrily, "What are you doing? You will ruin the scene! Be serious!"

Qin Guan was still tittering as he left to take off his clothes. He and Tang would have to be naked in the next scene.

They both had perfect figures. It was easy for a woman to pretend to climax, but it was just as easy for Qin Guan. He just thought of Cong Nianwei as he performed.

After the scene, Director Lee called Qin Guan over and patted his shoulder.

"We are all men here. I can understand. But as your senior, I would advise you not to watch too much porn. We are all

outsiders, but I know how you feel."

As he looked at Tang's disdainful expression, Qin Guan suddenly felt insulted. Before he could explain, Ang Lee sighed and left.

"What do you mean, sir? What are you talking about? I have never watched such a movie. I watch serious documentaries at home every day!"

Leehom Wang walked over and patted his shoulder, giving him a thumbs-up. Qin Guan fell silent again.

The atmosphere remained like that until the end of the film, when Tang actually fell in love with Qin Guan. The emotion had nothing to do with her task or the organization. It was a true love between a man and a woman.

She gave up just before the assassination.

Chapter 877: Belated Report

The girl betrayed her unreliable friends to protect her beloved, who was suspected by the Japanese and the people of Chongqing for transferring a batch of munition to an unknown location.

They were not supporting the puppet government, in which he held a high position, or the KMT in Chongqing. The hidden dark tones of the film indicated his mysterious identity. Plus, Secretary Zhang's behavior betrayed his awkward status inside the government. Thus, he had to personally execute Tang Wei, who had previously saved his life.

The woman, who loved him with all her heart, died with a smile on her face. The man who cherished her sat on the bed where she used to lay with a sorrowful expression. She had lived in that room. He looked back at the sheets before he left. Her trace was still on them. The wrinkles were still clear.

There was no real good or evil in the film. Zhang Ailing was not a righteous woman, so she never wrote about high morals. The story was just about the soft love of a woman.

Ang Lee was more emotional than most directors. This was rare and valuable in the circle, where people were familiar with endings.

Qin Guan had the chance to experience the moving scene with the entire crew. Everyone got on the stage in the style of the Republic of China and sang the ending song composed especially for the film. Ang Lee came over to check the site for the last time.

The song's exciting lyrics and tune made it perfect for a choir.

An ending is the freedom of dreams. An ending means the end of the film.

We are grateful for Ang Lee, who has created another outstanding film.

Thank you for your guidance and support.

At the time, the Taiwanese old man was no longer a Chinese director with a good reputation in Hollywood, but a simple man who felt sad.

Ang Lee got on the stage slowly and glanced at everyone's faces one by one. He was trying his best to memorize them. Maybe when they met again, he would recognize them with joy.

"Thank you!"

"No, I should be thanking you!" Ang Lee murmured, hugging Qin Guan.

Qin Guan was grateful for Ang Lee's support of Chinese actors and the chances he had given him. They were only parting to meet again.

Later, Qin Guan placed a strange call to Cong Nianwei.

"Wei, I might shift my focus back to America after the Spring Festival. Do you want to return to our villa in Long Island and clean it?"

"I have no spare time. You heard what our lead architect said. A long vacation would be out of the question."

"You are not an official employee..."

"I can't embarrass my professor. I'm the only graduate from Tsinghua University. Everyone else is from Tianjin University."

Okay. I can understand your pride for your alma mater.

"Why do you want to return to America? Do you want to go back to school or the firm on Wall Street?"

Qin Guan let out a sigh and told Cong Nianwei about his worry.

"You know me so well. We are childhood sweethearts through and through..."

"Just get to the point!"

"Okay. I shot a controversial film. Don't worry about it. I didn't reveal any important parts of my body. Plus, it will be edited before it hits theaters in China. The audience may prefer the unedited edition though. The internet is so developed nowadays. Somebody may use their imagination..."

"I can foresee the trouble back at home. I will be criticized by the SARFT, but Tang Wei, who portrays the heroine, may have a harder time. Don't believe any rumors that might surface. We are innocent! I swear on both our mothers! All the erotic scenes were shot with the use of special effects."

Qin Guan finished his words in one breath. The long silence at the other end of the line made him nervous.

Chapter 878: Benevolent Fund

"I want to watch the director's cut with you."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

Qin Guan felt reassured. Pleased by this narrow escape, he promised Cong Nianwei repeatedly that they would watch it together. Then he suddenly saw Wang Liying rush over to him. She seemed both angry and proud.

Qin Guan was really curious about the expression on her face.

"What happened? You've come at just the right moment. I'll fly to Thailand directly from Shanghai and stay there for a week. Chen Kang and Han Zhujiu will be staying with me. Old accommodation rules. This is a private trip for a friend's wedding. You will need to keep tabs on all my confidential work. So what happened? Is it anything interesting?"

Wang was happy with the understanding between her and Qin Guan. It would certainly lead to a successful career for her. Her salary was rising rapidly. It had only been one year, yet she was already earning 7,200 yuan a month. She was really satisfied with that.

Plus, she also earned commission from Qin Guan's films and TV series, which made her basically a wealthy woman. That was why Wang was so dedicated to her job. Besides, she also got to work with her idol!

She shared her information with Qin Guan happily.

"Boss, you truly are my confidant. Did you hear the news about your QC firm? The crew of 'The Promise' is completely shameless. They released their film in advance to get ahead of the negative news about the lawsuit! Director Zhang just called me to tell me his decision. He will release his film according to the original plan. He

informed me about the preparations for the première."

Qin Guan was not surprised by the news. There was still more trouble on the way.

"Anything else?"

"There is also a private matter. It concerns your friend Nicholas Tse."

"What is it? He is in the Philippines right now with his girlfriend. What happened to him? This is not the right moment. [1]"

"Right moment?"

Wang seemed confused. Qin Guan felt really nervous.

"Nothing. I was just thinking about other things. Go on."

"The couple's photos made the entertainment section headlines, but the news about Wang Fei replaced them."

"Wang Fei? What happened to her?"

"She gave birth to Li Yapeng's daughter. The girl has a hare lip. She has to have an operation."

The famous affair between the two stars was really complicated. Although she had married Li Yapeng, Wang Fei was still a cool woman stuck on her old ways. Li was not the master of the house by any means. After their daughter's misfortune, the couple had decided to establish a fund for kids suffering from the same disease.

The disease was not too serious. It could actually be cured after several operations when one was a child. The cost of the surgery was several thousand yuan though, so some poor families couldn't afford it.

The fund would help those poor kids change their lives. It was because of his daughter that Li had paid attention to the group.

Shocked by the couple's kindness, Qin Guan considered the

possibility of making a donation. Li had been really kind to him at the beginning of his career after all. After their collaboration on "The Legend Of The Swordsman", Qin Guan had gotten his private number.

His personal loyalty kicked in, making him sign a cheque and hand Li's number to Wang.

"Thank you for keeping me up to date. I'll tell Sister Xue to increase your salary by 300 yuan. Send the cheque to Li as a gift for her daughter. It's my donation to the Yanran Fund."

"No problem!"

Chapter 879: Meeting Friends In Thailand

Wang Liying couldn't control herself when she heard about her raise. She was so excited that her tongue was tied. "I'll do it immediately. Chen Kang and Han Zhujiu will arrive tomorrow. Shall I book a flight for the day after tomorrow?"

"It's up to you. I trust you."

What a sweet talker!

Wang returned to her office with tears in her eyes, willing to bear the burden of hard work. Meanwhile, Qin Guan lay in bed thinking about his friends. He fell asleep with a strange smile on his face.

Destiny is wonderful. I know both Nicholas Tse and Li Yapeng. Am I taking pleasure in their misfortune? I should just go to sleep already!

After a good night's sleep, he felt refreshed. Without the burden of work, he was able to relax during the trip to Thailand. Soon, he and his team arrived in Thailand and met Xie's servants at the airport.

Yes, the family had had its own servants for generations. Although this was 2006 and all humans were equal, this was a common occurrence in Thailand. In South-East Asia, most rich men, especially in the business and entertainment circle, were Chinese.

This had nothing to do with Qin Guan though, who was just enjoying the delicious food and beautiful beach. Xie Hanren had told him to visit the beach in Pattaya, watch a splendid she-male show, taste the cheap fresh seafood and enjoy the exotic floating market.

Xie's mansion was not located in Bangkok, which was a crowded, smelly city. It was actually in Pattaya, which had been flourishing lately. Pattaya was about 150 kilometers from Bangkok and it was

famous for the longest and most beautiful coastline in Thailand, as well as its American naval base.

Thailand had been the only independent country in the history of all the small nations of South-East Asia. It had been America's landing location during World War II, so the base had remained intact. It was concealed during that time of the year, as the US would usually send two or three troops of veterans there for training.

As a result, the rich men living in that area felt very safe.

Xie's family was clustered on a small hill in Pattaya, far away from the tourist area. The largest, most gorgeous villa belonged to Xie's mother. The Thai style villa had golden exterior walls.

To Qin Guan, it looked like a nouveau riche house, but in Thailand, this was actually a symbolic look.

The servants who picked Qin Guan up from the airport could speak fluent English. They made an introduction about every member of the Xie family and then turned towards the beautiful view of Pattaya. When they reached Xie Hanren's villa, Qin Guan experienced a luxury that only the richest, most powerful people in the world were privy to.

Unlike the elegant Arabian villa he had been to before, this villa was a combination of the best, most expensive things in existence.

The garden was designed in English style. All the lawns and trees were trimmed and arranged into a simple labyrinth for children. All along the path to the entrance were two lines of European sculptures that depicted strong soldiers holding shields and spears. The sculptures took one back to the Renaissance Era.

As Qin Guan seated himself in the exotic hall and tasted the traditional Chinese tea, Xie rushed downstairs to meet him. He was an honest man wearing golden-framed glasses.

"Sorry I kept you waiting, Qin Guan."

Chapter 880: The Princess

"Do you like my villa? It's nice, isn't it? Your room is ready. Just make yourself at home! I'll have my servant follow you everywhere in Thailand. If you need any help, all you have to do is ask him."

"If you don't like the food outside, my cook will cook anything you request. I also have several Chinese cooks here. You can have dinner or a night snack any time you like."

"Is that okay for you?"

Of course! I'm really satisfied.

After greeting each other, they both turned to the banquet.

The banquet was the QC firm's job. Xie Hanren's farther found the accounts of the Chinese firm to be very careful and detailed. Plus, their charges were pretty reasonable. Their business was going better thanks to the Industry and Commerce Administration and the Chinese Tax Department.

That was why the old man had become interested in the firm. When he found out that the owner was the famous Qin Guan, he made an important decision.

He decided to treat Qin Guan like a second-generation member of the family. His patriotic family maintained closer contact with the Chinese mainland than other families.

At the time, their business had been flourishing and the old man was considered the richest guy in Thailand. No flower could bloom for over 100 days though. Even lions aged after a few years.

Eventually, the whole business would be divided among his offspring and the family would not be the richest one in the country any longer. They would need help from all directions, especially from China. The old man had to weave a network in advance, both in political and business circles.

The banquet was a knot on that net. Actually, Qin Guan was not averse to this method. What the hell would the princess do at the banquet though?

The royal family of Thailand had originated from an army coup. Although it exercised constitutional monarchy, the military still played an important role in the nation. Their so-called democracy was closely guarded by soldiers.

The leader of the current government in Thailand was Thaksin, a man who put the interests of the poor first when it came to national development goals.

His series of reformations, which were for the welfare of the people, harmed the interests of the wealthy upper class. As a result, the Yellow Jackets were opposing Thaksin, and the Red Jackets were supporting him by fighting back.

The constant conflict between the Yellow Jackets and the Red Jackets everywhere scared away all foreign visitors.

The people who relied on tourism to make a living were unsatisfied with the government. Xie was not worried about the chaos though. This was common for local people. Qin Guan was the only one who felt a little anxious.

Thailand was a country with constitutional monarchy, so the royal family did not have much power. They were still a symbol in common people's eyes though, so the princess sent Xie an envoy to express her intention to meet Qin Guan. She knew that Xie was a friend of his.

A fan? Okay! That did not affect the bigger picture.

There were not that many princesses in Thailand, but she was the daughter of the first rani and Thailand's crown prince, so she was a real descendant of the royal family.

The next evening, Qin Guan attended the private banquet of the Xie family. The guest list included great entrepreneurs from

Thailand and the mysterious Princess Bajrakitiyabha.

Qin Guan's graceful manners and handsome looks impressed all the guests, especially the Xie brothers, who knew the difficulties of starting with nothing. It was impossible to achieve so much without talent.

That was why they treated Qin Guan with sincerity.

After he passed their test, they agreed to introduce him to the princess. Although the meeting would be private, security was still a must.

Chapter 881: Drama

When Qin Guan showed up in the splendid hall in a formal suit, everyone gasped in admiration.

Beautiful girls were as necessary at banquets as snacks at a party. Well-informed agencies would send them for the distinguished guests.

The Xie family was rich, so they did not spare any expenses. Thus, there were many charming women among the aged men.

Rich men were always old, so Qin Guan ended up becoming the center of attention. He was young, successful, rich and handsome!

All the people around Qin Guan looked the same. The confident girls walked over as if by accident.

"Ah!" A soft voice attracted the men's attention. They suddenly saw a girl in a white dress fall before them in an elegant manner. She seemed to go through layers of curtains in front of the balcony before finally reaching that exact spot.

Her fair neck and slender legs indicated that she was a pretty girl. As experienced men, they were all familiar with such tricks.

Men had many deep-rooted bad habits though. Such an incident would be interesting if it posed no risk for their interests. Thus, a few young men spoke up. The Thai language sounded gentle when the speakers were not upset.

"Alas! Are you okay, young lady? Do you need any help?"

The man closest to the girl stretched his hand out.

"Thank you!" The girl looked up at him with watery eyes. She was a really beautiful woman, a fact that satisfied the man.

Before their hands could touch, the curtains opened again and the warm air of the party drifted out to the balcony. Some gentlemen frowned at the sudden disturbance. When they saw

what was happening clearly, they were intrigued.

An excited girl rushed out, pushed the young man away and pulled the weak girl up from the floor.

"Poy, you are here! How did you fall down? Get up, quick!"

The girl on the floor couldn't help but stand up. She was confused by the unexpected competitor.

The second girl bowed before everyone in gratitude.

"Sorry for the trouble. Thank you for being kind to my friend."

Her beautiful boobs were visible in her low-cut dress when she bent over.

Qin Guan burst into laughter at the interesting actresses. If Xie Hanren had not pulled him back, he would have fallen down from the balcony.

If the two women used their acting skills in their performance, they would become award-winning actresses one day. Qin Guan's abrupt laughter made the crowd calm down. The two girls turned in unison towards the man who had dared laugh at them openly.

Suddenly, they screamed out.

"It's Qin Guan!"

Their Chinese was pretty good!

"In the flesh!"

They immediately forgot about their sponsors. There were rich men everywhere, but there was only one Qin Guan.

The girl in the white dress started looking for a pen to get an autograph, while the girl in red rushed back to the curtains and disappeared from the balcony.

Everyone stood there in confusion. No one knew what to say.

Qin Guan stepped away from the edge of the balcony awkwardly, afraid that those crazy girls might push him down.

Before the girl in white could reach her idol, Qin Guan saw Wang Liying come out of the curtains and gesture at him.

"Excuse me. I have something to do. I'll be back as soon as I can."

Qin Guan walked over to Wang and entered the hall. Then he realized what was going on.

The girl in red was really smart. She had analyzed the pros and cons quickly and decided not to stay on the balcony. Instead, she had found her agent as fast as she could. What an opportunity! If she could get on the same boat as Qin Guan, she would get plenty of chances to ask for an autograph!

Chapter 882: Hand-Kissing

Thus, her agent had asked around until he spotted Wang Liying. He was really happy about this opportunity.

Wang couldn't make a decision like that though. She had to ask Qin Guan's opinion first. Eventually, those two smart, lucky individuals got in touch with Qin Guan himself.

As soon as they took their seats, the emcee at the entrance shouted at full volume, "Her Highness the Princess has arrived!"

Everyone in the hall fixed their eyes on the entrance. The princess, who was wearing a golden dress, was followed by a group of uniformed maids as she entered the hall slowly. She took off her cloak and handed it over to one of the servants. The young princess greeted the host first.

Regardless of her status in the royal family, the girl looked very pretty, which only added brilliance to her splendor. Although they were all fans of Qin Guan, she looked much more elegant than the two girls on the balcony.

The master of the Xie family reminded Qin Guan to stand up and stretch his right hand out towards the princess.

"May I have the honor of making your acquaintance?"

The princess stretched her hand towards Qin Guan without a word. As her palm lay on his, Qin Guan bent over naturally with his left hand behind his back. He touched the tip of his nose gently against the back of her hand and made a kissing sound with his lips.

This was standard polite hand-kissing.

Actually, most films misinterpreted this gesture. Hand-kissing in Europe only involved a touch with one's nose tip. It was no French kiss by any means.

Qin Guan's outstanding manners impressed the princess and her entourage. Qin Guan arose and said, "Thank you!"

The whole procedure was finally over. Qin Guan led the princess into the hall as everyone went back to their conversations.

They took a seat on a black leather couch.

"Hello, Qin Guan. I'm a fan of yours," the princess said. "I have watched all your films and TV shows. They are wonderful!"

"Thank you!"

Qin Guan expressed his appreciation. The princess spoke good Chinese. It was rare for a member of the royal family to speak standard Mandarin so well. Plus, she was an elegant, smart, calm fan. Qin Guan didn't feel any pressure as they talked.

The girl was very polite at public events. Wang Liying was a little disappointed about that. It seemed that the princess loved the actor and his work, not just his looks.

When the banquet came to an end, the princess' servant reminded her. The princess stood up reluctantly, ready to say goodbye and leave early.

Qin Guan stood up from the couch politely, when a man suddenly rushed into the hall. He was wearing a royal blue uniform with bronze buttons. He had to be one of the princess' servants.

He handed the princess a crystal cell phone.

"Your Highness, it's a call from His Majesty!"

"Papa?"

When he saw the princess turn serious, Qin Guan paid close attention to the conversation.

"Did you know that in advance, papa?"

"If I did, I wouldn't have let you go out tonight."

"Okay, I'll be careful."

The short, hurried conversation made Qin Guan worry. The princess smiled at him when she ended the call.

"It seems that Mr. Qin is destined to stay with me. I have to stay at the banquet for a while."

Qin Guan made a polite gesture. Then the princess and her servants walked over to Xie Guomin.

Xie Hanren walked over to meet them, which seemed to annoy the girl in red.

"What happened? I thought she was about to leave. Why is she approaching my dad?"

"No idea. She just received a call from her dad."

A serious topic like that was out of their league, so they went back to gossiping again.

Chapter 883: A Big Event

Xie failed to get an answer from Qin Guan, so he changed the topic to the farce on the balcony. He couldn't help but share a secret with Qin Guan.

"Do you know Joy? She was the girl who fell down earlier."

"I don't."

I'm Chinese. I know nothing about the entertainment circle in Thailand.

"Her name was Joy." Some playboys fell silent as soon as they heard the name. "Do you know why?"

Of course not. I don't know the girl.

"She was originally a man. She is a transgender person."

Okay, you're scaring me! That delicate girl is actually a man?

Qin Guan shivered at the thought.

"She has known about her gender ever since she was a child. She was lucky to be born in a rich family. In Thailand, such surgeries are pretty successful. Now she is not a semi-finished product anymore. She has transitioned completely."

That was why those young men hadn't showed any interest in the pretty girl. It was ridiculous for a straight man to fall in love with a she-male. Any man would run away as fast as he could. This was a symbol of the lowest social class in Thailand after all. The difficulties of transgender life drove many poor men to the road.

Individuals who had had unsuccessful surgeries couldn't survive for long, as they couldn't satisfy the tourists' tastes. It was an ugly, twisted business. Joy was different though.

Some poor men were forced into this life, but Joy had chosen it. Still, people would shoot meaningful looks at them all the same.

Qin Guan sighed silently. Life was really hard for transgender individuals.

When he saw that Qin Guan was not interested in the gossip, Xie Hanren changed the topic. He had just done his duty by warning Qin Guan.

Suddenly, Qin Guan felt something strange. He looked at Xie Guomin and the princess. The solemn expression on Xie's face indicated that there was a serious problem.

When they finished their conversation, Xie Guomin got on the stage at the front of the hall and clapped his hands to attract the attention of the guests. Then he pointed to the second floor of the luxurious building.

"First, I would like to express my appreciation to all of you for coming here tonight. Of course, most of our guests are relatives or good friends of Xie."

"However, we also have the honor of having our beautiful princess here today. The banquet is reaching its end, so I would like to present you with a surprise. Does everyone in here know that my hometown is in China?"

"Yes..."

"I would like to show you my collection of Chinese treasure! My private collection is unmatched in the world! It's a feast for the eyes."

All the guests cheered up at the news. They belonged in the same circle, so they had basically the same taste. The collection of the richest family in the country had to be amazing.

Thus, they all followed Xie Guomin to the second floor.

Xie Hanren and Qin Guan were among the crowd. Along the way, Xie whispered to Qin Guan, 'This is strange. My dad never shows his treasure to anyone. I hardly ever see it myself. Why is he being so gallant today? Such a big number of people could break his

porcelain!"

Is your dad's porcelain made of paper?

When the last guest stepped onto the second floor, all the servants left the hall in an orderly manner without cleaning up the mess.

Then a group of security guards poured into the hall. They all seemed well-trained and valiant.

In some turbulent countries, security agencies couldn't satisfy rich men, as the sudden dangers there exceeded their professional skills.

However, there was a strange group of people in the world called mercenaries. If one paid them enough money, they could be the best security guards in a peaceful environment. The security guards hired by the Xie family were exactly like that. The whole mansion was currently on guard.

No emergency could surprise Han Zhujiu though, who used to be a member of the Chinese Special Forces. He had sensed the upcoming danger as soon as he had heard about the phone call the princess had received. Although he had been working in Chinatown for a long time, the basic nature of a soldier was still in his blood. It was an indispensable instinct.

Thus, after whispering something to Qin Guan, Han followed the guests into the treasure room.

Chapter 884: A Smooth Coup d'Etat

All the lights in the treasure room were turned on as soon as they entered, revealing the transparent glass showcases.

There were various kinds of rare treasure in them, all of which were Chinese antiques. Some of them had come from auction houses around the world, while others from private collections.

They all expressed the owner's love for Chinese antiques. Some guests with the same hobby took out their magnifying glasses to evaluate the collection.

As they all got absorbed in the exhibition, Xie Guomin shot a look at his assistant. The door of the room was closed silently. All the security cameras around the mansion were operating.

When everything was over, Xie walked up to the princess. The two of them whispered something to each other to get a confirmation.

Then the princess said, "According to my information, a military coup was attempted about an hour ago. The government is cornered. We have to wait for more details."

Her words were short, but informative. The antique fans came back to their senses instantly. The crowd stirred as they drew a breath as one. It was like a water drop falling into a cauldron full of oil.

"What? This is an emergency. Why weren't we notified?"

"I wonder what the army is planning on doing."

Although the guests were worried, they were not panic-stricken. Military coups happened every day in Thailand. Everyone was just calmly talking about the next steps, which shocked the Chinese people in the room.

Hey! We are talking about a coup d'etat! Why are you all so

relaxed? This would have been unheard of in China!

Xie Hanren could see Qin Guan's confusion, so he tried to explain Thailand's tradition.

Ever since the king had lost control of the troops, the military had been self-governing. The current king and princess might have seemed like media mascots, but they actually had strong connections to the army. The king always expressed his opinion about political parties and the government. It was hard to tell whether the domestic chaos had originated from the king or the troops anymore.

The wise Chinese guests concluded that the army was the key to steady political power.

That explained the calmness of the princess. People didn't care that much about the matter. Meanwhile, the TV could receive a signal from outside, so they found out what was going on.

Information spread conveniently thanks to the smart reporters. Thailand was a renowned tourist destination, so there were many foreign reporters stationed there. Before the situation was even stable, they had already gone out looking for precious inside information.

The existence of war correspondents showed a kind of noble sentiment, while the military was needed to comfort people. Thanks to the news broadcast, they found out that the smooth process of handing and taking over political power had only taken three hours.

In combination with some technical procedures, the government change had taken about five hours. The harmony that followed pleased everyone. Soon, the security guards informed them that the emergency was over. All the guests could now leave safely.

The next morning, they would see a new prime minister on TV. Thailand was so efficient!

The security measures around the mansion were still in place, in case some people took advantage of the situation to try something in the area.

After those exciting events, Qin Guan and his team returned to their rooms tiredly. They needed to have a good night's sleep in order to relax.

The first thing Qin Guan did was take a bath. The water drops fell on his body, making him feel refreshed.

Bang, bang! There was somebody knocking on the door.

"Who's there? It's really late!"

"It's me! Wang Liying."

"Wait a moment. I'm taking a bath!"

"No. Just check your email, Brother Qin!"

"What?"

The girl left.

Chapter 885: Pomelo Leaves

She must have been aware of the time and known clearly what he was doing thanks to the sound of the water drops. As a moral agent, she kept a proper distance from the actor she worked for. Even the subtlest action was prohibited.

Qin Guan got out of the bathroom and dried his hair off with a towel, smiling at her tactfulness. When he put on his pajamas and opened his laptop, he saw what she had meant.

The microblog had caused him trouble again! The blog was an instant, convenient method to show off, yet it also had its flaws.

In his previous post, Qin Guan had been standing barefoot on the white beach, the green ocean and blue sky serving as his background. That day, he hadn't updated the microblog in time for the banquet, which caused his fans to go crazy.

His close friends and relatives used all kinds of means to make sure he was safe and confirm his schedule, but his fans online were not as lucky.

Losing contact with Qin Guan made them question everything and come up with strange theories.

"Striking news! A military coup just took place in Thailand!"

"That's terrible! But what has it got to do with us?"

"Qin Guan is in Thailand visiting a friend. Didn't you know?"

"I had no idea. I thought he was at home!"

"Check his blog. He was at Pattaya Beach yesterday!"

"Oh my! Is he in danger? This sounds terrible!"

"Of course it is. Remember the riots in France last time?"

"Yes. People said that Qin Guan's team had met the thugs and the Chinese embassy had offered them shelter."

"Is he being held prisoner in Thailand? Will he return to China in time for the premier of 'Curse Of The Golden Flower'?"

"Yes. I'm really worried about him. He always attracts accidents."

"He should just stay at home."

"He should go to Japan. There will be a film festival in Tokyo at the end of the year."

"Good idea!"

"Good idea!"

"Two of his films have already been short-listed."

"Do you think the island will sink if he visits?"

...

Speechless, Qin Guan called his firm immediately to put a stop to that strange discussion.

Soon, the microblog was updated with his latest news.

"Thank you all for your concern about Qin Guan. He is safe and sound. Goodnight, everyone!"

His loyal fans logged off happily. It was already midnight, so it was time to go to bed. The warm responses made Qin Guan feel less lonely in a foreign country. The worry caused by the banquet was gone, so he was able to get a good night's sleep.

Despite those breathtaking moments, the trip was perfect overall. Qin Guan returned home with many specialties from Xie Hanren. He also got a large order from the Chia Tai Group, which would help his firm develop a lot.

Cong Nianwei allowed Qin Guan to walk through the front door and then swept him from head to toe with pomelo leaves.

"Are you kidding me? These are used for returning prisoners!"

"I have to sweep the bad luck away."

Honey, you have been influenced by internet users. I know your username online!

Absence always made the heart grow fonder. The two of them lay in bed shoulder to shoulder. It was really cold in Beijing during late autumn.

After sharing their work-related news, Cong Nianwei cheered her boyfriend up with the latest news about "The Promise".

"Now Director Zhang can sit back and relax. He will win the battle easily. As long as the audience understands the film, it will enjoy a successful box office."

"Why?"

"Get the laptop for me."

Qin Guan jumped out of bed, rushed to the living room and returned as fast as he could. He might even have been faster than Liu Xiang. Without the obstacle of shorts, a man could reach his full potential.

"What do you want to show me?" His hands trembled as he handed over the laptop.

"The comments on 'The Promise'."

There was not a single good comment about the film.

A film couldn't please everyone, but if it drove 99% of the audience out of the cinema, it had to be atrocious.

Chapter 886: A Steamed Bun

It was an indie film with a limited budget. Indie films such as Qin Guan's films "Lost Smile" and "Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind" were usually accepted by the masses. Some people loved them, while others didn't.

However, a blockbuster movie that wasn't accepted by the majority of the public violated the principles of commercial movies. Failure did not just entail bad consequences for the producers, but also for the audience who had spent money in order to watch the film.

Some directors believed that commercial movies did not use high-end technology. They were just created to entertain the audience. Those days, people were under great pressure due to the fast pace of their jobs. They just wanted to release some of that pressure by watching a movie, so they chose commercial films with the intent to laugh or cry their hearts out.

That was why that film was so ambiguous. Ordinary audiences were cursing about their wasted money, while professional critics remained silent, waiting for other people to comment first. They were too afraid of appearing confused.

Amid that strange silence and angry curses, it was Chen Hong who attracted the public's attention again.

She stated openly that in a country without a well-educated population, the audience would need at least five years to understand the film's message.

Her statement caused an uproar.

After a lot of negative media coverage, a soldier named Hu Ge made a short film that made fun of the entertainment circle. It was called "Massacre Caused By A Steamed Bun" and it lasted only 19 minutes. As soon as it was uploaded online, it went viral all over

the country.

"Look! It's so interesting!"

Cong Nianwei showed Qin Guan the film.

At the beginning of the short film, Hu Ge declared that the film only expressed his personal opinions. What a smart guy!

He was good at editing and making jokes. The short film was bright and funny, which impressed the audience a lot.

Soon, Hu became famous thanks to the film, which irritated Chen Kaige.

Chen was the first director to get angry at internet users. His wife was much angrier than he was though. As a result, Hu Ge received a lawsuit not long thereafter.

The couple asked Hu to apologize publicly for violating copyright laws. Everyone was shocked. Hu had just voiced what they thought in a special way.

After many years, Chen Hong's image as the beautiful princess from "Daming Palace" collapsed. Eventually, the comedy turned into a farce. Qin Guan couldn't help but sigh when he heard the news. That year, those two famous directors ruined big-budget films in China.

Thanks to that terrible beginning, all domestic film producers and directors entered an armed race. Investments increased and casting lists became longer, but the quality of the films was still deteriorating.

It would take a long time for them to adjust in the future. At the time, the public was not that tolerable with bad movies. "The Promise" suffered a crushing defeat. Despite its investment of 300 million yuan, it failed to earn even 30 million back.

The film destroyed Chen's reputation. Now everyone thought that he was outdated. That was the cruel reality of being a director.

One had to make up for a failure by directing several good films.

This was good news for Zhang Yimou though.

"When will your film be in theaters?" Cong Nianwei asked Qin Guan as she wrapped a quilt around herself.

"Probably in November."

"Why? Jiang Wen's film was finished first. Why has it taken so long?"

"The film has to be approved by the SARFT first, you know."

It was mandatory to send a film to the SARFT for classification before screening it in China or submitting it at a foreign film festival. Otherwise, it would be considered an underground film.

As a result, Jiang Wen had to go through that process like a good boy. He had also avoided the favorite auction calendar of Hollywood big shots.

He was in no rush. His aim was the Venice Film Festival next year. A spot there was enough for him.

After his explanation, Cong Nianwei fell asleep. Qin Guan kissed her forehead and uttered the most tender words in the world.

"Sweet dreams!"

Home was the best cradle in the world.

After all that chaos, Qin Guan couldn't spend any leisure time at home anymore. In 2008, premieres became more and more important for the publicity of a film. This was the first time he was invited to a premiere, despite the fact that he had participated in so many films in the past.

Chapter 887: The Premiere

People didn't focus on this stuff though. Plus, Qin Guan was usually too busy.

The film "Curse Of The Golden Flower" premiered during a specific period of the year though. It was the most fun time for most actors, so the crew expected that Qin Guan would promote the film even more through the premiere.

The event would be held at the Wanda Mall, which was located on the East 2nd Ring. It was the most luxurious shopping mall in Asia. The open shopping center and cinema combined cuisine, entertainment and shopping. That premiere would be the first to be held there.

Reporters, distinguished guests and fans crowded into the hall that day.

The lucky fans who had gotten invitations for the premiere entered the hall, looking excited and worried. A glimpse outside the hall confirmed Qin Guan's presence.

They were so excited! They would get the rare chance to meet Qin Guan in person!

Gong Li and Chow Yun-Fat were absent from the ceremony, but no one cared about that. They just wanted to meet Qin Guan.

When Qin Guan got on the stage, the audience got excited.

"Qin Guan! Look over here!"

"Qin Guan! I love you!"

The chaos that ensued covered the host's voice. Camera and cell phone clicks could be heard everywhere. In an effort to keep the premiere running smoothly, Qin Guan gestured at everyone. "Hush..." He hoped his fans would go silent and at least let the host finish his introduction.

The fans gasped in admiration at his manners. Some girls almost fainted, their hands going to their chests. Everyone lowered their voices and let the host speak.

The host, who was from the Beijing Entertainment Channel, finished his job professionally. Any host would feel awkward around Qin Guan. No man was more handsome and famous than the award-winning actor after all. Qin Guan's smile could beat even the most well-crafted speech.

Soon, the eager fans and reporters began to ask questions.

"Director Zhang, what are your expectations regarding the box office?"

"It's said that you invested 100 million in the film."

"What do you think of the failure of 'The Promise'?"

"Is this the era of Chinese blockbusters?"

"Your film has been nominated for an Oscar. Is this because of Qin Guan's influence?"

"Could you please introduce the characters and their relationships in advance?"

Director Zhang was left speechless by the sparkling eyes under the stage. Both the media and the audience seemed to be very interested in the film.

"Sorry, but this is the premiere. I'll only answer questions about the film."

He looked at his watch deliberately and whispered to the host, "The reporters have 10 minutes."

The reporters and the audience looked anxious. We haven't gotten any answers yet!

They all concentrated their fire on Qin Guan and Jay Chou.

"Qin Guan, this is your first cooperation with Chou, who is

actually a singer. What did you think of his acting skills?"

You are going to get me in trouble, bro.

Qin Guan began to praise Chou against his will. "He is a very hard-working actor. He can study a single scene until midnight. He is the most dedicated young actor I have ever met. We are also good friends in real life."

Chou felt so moved that he leaned his shoulder against Qin Guan's.

Thank you so much, dude.

Actually, Qin Guan hadn't even mentioned anything about his acting skills.

"Qin Guan, what's your opinion about your character in the film? He is a coward. He does not seem like a real prince. Is he quite different from your previous roles?"

You have no idea what a different role is really like.

Qin Guan usually made the decision to disappear as soon as one of his films was in theaters.

Such questions were nothing for him though.

"In my opinion, an actor should keep making progress forever. Even if they are suitable for only one type of film, they should still act with all their effort. A famous actor can succeed through only playing one kind of character, but there are so many films and roles in the world. If I could choose, I would try a new one each time."

"For example, the eldest prince is not a very decisive man, He is actually a complicated coward, so a character like him is a challenge for my acting skills."

Chapter 888: A Shocking Box Office Success

Exactly!

The audience nodded their heads in unison as a reporter asked the last question of the day.

"As an international star, you must have read a lot of outstanding scripts, both domestically and overseas. Can we know what your expectations for the film are?"

"Nowadays, everyone is trying to shoot a commercial film in the right way. That's what the situation is like. In my opinion, this film will be a successful commercial film. It has all the elements of a good commercial film, and the plot is exciting enough."

"It's an educational indie film, as well as a feast for the eyes. It has outstanding martial arts scenes, bright colors and a profound connotation. It's perfect for this era."

"Your film 'Crazy Stone' earned a lot of money despite its limited budget. What are your expectations for a great investment like this?"

"Hey! No more questions!"

"This is the last one!"

At first, Qin Guan didn't want to answer, but the audience urged him, so he had to say something.

"There are different ways to shoot films with different budgets. You can focus on the plot or hire superstars and build splendid props. A hundred flowers in bloom mean that spring is here. Only a variety of films can satisfy the Chinese audience."

Everyone was satisfied. Suddenly, pots of artificial flowers were carried onto the stage. All the distinguished guests were surrounded by chrysanthemums.

"Let's take a group photo with the most important props of the

film."

"In memory of the premiere!"

"The audience members can draw lots on our website with their stubs. Ten lucky fans will get a copy of the group photo with all the actors' signatures."

Everyone was wild with joy.

The actors on the stage stood around Director Zhang and smiled happily amid a cluster of golden flowers. The picture symbolized the film's success.

Not long afterwards, the film started. Most of the audience was impressed by the splendid scenes and the grand fight, which had required thousands of extras to film. After watching "The Promise" earlier, people were more tolerant than they had been before. At least this grand spectacle could satisfy them after a day of hard work.

When the film came to an end, the curtain was lifted again and the lights were turned on. All the actors were applauded by the audience. This was the proper etiquette for a premiere after all. The hard-working director and actors deserved their respect.

The film's small flaws were ignored by the good-tempered audience. Some of the fans hadn't focused on the film itself though. They had only paid attention to Qin Guan's character.

"He is so handsome..."

"If I was a maid, Jiang Wan would never get in bed alone."

"Yes. His smile was so beautiful!"

"I think I could have his baby just by looking at his smile."

"Wow! Gong Li didn't even kiss him."

"What a pity!"

Everyone was too distracted to notice Chow's terrible acting

skills, which was great.

After the crew had travelled around half the country, the box office results finally came out, stunning everyone.

Opening Day: 15 million yuan

First Week: 103 million yuan (in China); 4.5 million dollars (in North America); 55.8 million dollars (globally) The film had exceeded the entire country's expectations.

The audience in North America had been tired of martial arts, but thanks to Qin Guan's participation, the box office had started increasing gradually, until it eventually broke the 10-million line after the first week.

An award-winning actor would never star in a box office flop after all.

Ms. Chen broke all her tableware in anger when she heard about Zhang Yimou's success.

The film's huge profits increased the ambitions of Chinese directors, who became confident again after their failures in commercial films. The operation had worked!

Chapter 889: Ultraman At The Tokyo Film Festival

Thanks to that film, the Chinese got rich. Because of the rising economy, Chinese people had a more disposable personal income, so they were willing to spend money on their favorite actors and authorized DVD copies.

It was a flourishing year for the film industry. That year, offers, scripts and investment deals were pouring into Qin Guan's office. The business of his firms was also rising rapidly. He was both frustrated and happy to receive an invitation from Tokyo, as two of his films had been selected by the festival.

Qin Guan decided to walk on the red carpet alone to avoid hurting anyone's feelings.

The Tokyo Film Festival, which was the only international 9A-level festival in Asia, had been founded in 1985, and its influence was not inferior to any European film festival.

In 2006, the Busan Film Festival had not come to prominence yet and the Chinese Festival had still been developing, so the Tokyo Film Festival was the most prestigious one in Asia.

The Japanese entertainment circle featured outstanding animation and high-end post-production procedures. Influenced by surrounding countries such as South Korea, the Japanese felt the impending risk of losing their throne. In an effort to maintain the high level of their festival, the organizing committee had invested a lot of money and labor into staying in the lead.

One week before the opening ceremony, the Roppongi Area in Tokyo began to dress itself up.

When Qin Guan walked out of the hotel heavily-armed, he saw a beautiful city alight with neon lights.

There were large cartoon-like signs all around him. The guests'

cars were moving along them as people crowded around the red carpet. Flashing lights were sparkling everywhere. Before Qin Guan could reach the red carpet, he was stunned by the other stars standing on it.

How can I walk on the carpet with that group of people around me?

He felt the impulse to return to his hotel immediately, but Wang pulled at his sleeve and pointed to the signs. "The red carpet is only 20 meters long. Based on your speed, it will take you only a few minutes to cross it. The interview will take five minutes and the photos just three... Then you will be able to enter the main hall. Our sponsors will pay you an extra 10,000 dollars for your time!"

"To go, or not to go? That is the question..."

"Go, go!"

Money always beat dignity.

Actually, Qin Guan had misunderstood the organizing committee. Because of his status, they had arranged a place especially for him. He would take the lead in the festival. He was an honor to all Asian actors after all.

As a result, it was hard for them to find an equal actor to walk together with him. After brainstorming for a long time, they made an inspired decision.

Some superstars with the same international fame would be Qin Guan's companions on the red carpet.

This was a difficult feat for the committee, as strictly speaking, those stars were much more famous than Qin Guan.

As Qin Guan's car pulled up to the carpet slowly, he saw Ultraman standing there, waiting for him.

One rarely saw a fictional character and a real star appear together at such an event. Only in Japan, the country of

animation, could the audience witness such a thing.

Ultraman, who was both a comic book and film superhero, had been assigned to accompany Qin Guan.

The superhero had already emitted light waves twice in an effort to warm up.

The door of Qin Guan's car was opened by the festival staff. Wang Liying hid inside the car and pushed Qin Guan out. "See you in the hall later. Go!"

As soon as Qin Guan got out of the car, she closed the door and left. Qin Guan was left standing alone, surrounded by reporters.

Not far ahead, Ultraman was waving his hand at him. Suddenly, Qin Guan felt ashamed. He looked like a small monster about to be defeated by Ultraman.

The foreign media finally saw a real man. They wouldn't let Qin Guan go easily.

Chapter 890: Farewell, My Love

Qin Guan started taking strong steps forward. The reporters were not satisfied with being limited to that small area by the strange regulations of the festival.

The Japanese restricted their ideas with all kinds of laws and procedures, so they had set strict rules on the schedule of the film festival as well.

The stars had to walk to the middle of the carpet according to the beat and then stop. According to the regulators, they had to smile, turn left, smile, turn right, and then move forward.

Fictional characters didn't have to follow that rule though. When Ultraman began to take his symbolic crossed-arms pose, no one came to stop him. Japan was more lenient with fictional characters than with real people.

The foreign reporters made their way over to Qin Guan and pointed their cameras at him.

"Qin Guan, look over here!"

"Qin Guan, smile!"

Even though they were occupying the fan area, the Japanese fans did not complain.

The Japanese had been focused on other people's appearance since ancient times. In such a country, Qin Guan was considered a national treasure. The fans were screaming out, ignoring the excited reporters.

They were waving glow sticks, lamps, dolls... Anything they could find. The crowd followed Qin Guan to the middle of the carpet. Suddenly, a fat man in black walked around a corner slowly. Although he was confident about his own power, the crowd around him would make any individual feel like an ant.

He put his arms down carefully to reveal the person hiding behind his strong body.

"You!"

"Hai!"

"You protected me well, but I wasn't able to see anything."

It was an angry Japanese girl. Only Yamaguchi Tsutomu would wear a traditional kimono to such an event.

The strong man didn't argue with her. He just bowed deeply, looking very guilty. "My bad, Miss. I'll fight over the best viewpoint for you."

"That's up to you."

"Hai!"

The big man rushed into the crowd like a bomb, forcing open a narrow path. Yamaguchi Tsutomu walked along the path at a moderate pace.

"There he is, Miss!"

They were just in time. Qin Guan was walking in the direction of the girl.

"Mr. Qin Guan!"

Qin Guan followed the sound of the voice and turned towards Yamaguchi Tsutomu.

"Yamaguchi Tsutomu?"

A soft fleck of dust flew over to him. Qin Guan caught it unconsciously.

"I will always be your fan, Qin Guan! I really like you!"

"Thanks. I like you too."

Qin Guan waved at the girl kindly and walked to the end of the carpet. The girl didn't move with the crowd.

"Shall I find you another position up front, Miss? Or would you like to know the number of his room?"

"No, that's it for today. Thank you. Let's go back now."

"Hai!"

Rich families made connections through marriage. Everybody's life was on the right track, but reality was the best stimuli. In the real world, even a really powerful man couldn't swim in shallow waters forever.

Yamaguchi Tsutomu bid her love farewell. From that day on, she would go her own way. If everything went well, the two of them would never meet again.

Qin Guan felt guilty for stealing the spotlight from a popular children's character.

Doraemon was moving after him, waving its round hands at the audience.

I should move faster. I don't want to stay here with it.

This had to be the funniest red carpet event Qin Guan had attended. Eventually, he reached the stage at the end of the carpet and said goodbye to the cartoon characters.

The hostess was an elegant woman with a familiar voice. She didn't ask Qin Guan any awkward questions and she let him go as soon as his time was up.

When Qin Guan took his seat, Wang reminded him who she was.

"The hostess is a cartoon voice-over actress. The organizing committee is really creative!"

"Wow! That explains why her voice sounded so familiar. Which character has she dubbed?"

"Minamoto Shizuka."

Chapter 891: A Shocking Twist

Okay. Could you please tell me where Nobita Nobi is? What a mess! I think Gouda must be on his way.

After that incident, the event proceeded normally. When the finalists were announced, Qin Guan let out a long sigh. His two films had two different goals. One was aiming at the Asian award, and the other at an independent award. Qin Guan himself was not on the list of nominated actors though.

All the cameras turned to him. He was just as confused.

What's going on? Have they made a terrible mistake? If he is not nominated, why did the organizing committee invite him to the event?

Qin Guan shot a look at the two directors. Were they messing with him?

Wang got angry immediately. The invitation she had received had stated that Qin Guan had been nominated for an award at the festival. Is this true? Liars! They invited a superstar by tricking him to add glamour to their ceremony. Now they can publish that Qin Guan has returned to China empty-handed. Liars! What the f*ck... They just wanted to use Qin Guan!

Wang Liying had the impulse to pull Qin Guan out of the hall. If you want big news, I'll give you a bigger scoop for free! "The Tokyo Film Festival cheats an award-winning actor. According to the calculations, Qin Guan has lost one million dollars by attending the event..." Just wait and see!

Before Wang could bounce up from her seat, the host on the stage announced the most important award of the festival in a trembling voice.

"The winner of the Asian Outstanding Contribution Award of the

20th Tokyo Film Festival is Qin Guan from China! Let's welcome him on the stage with our warmest applause! I hope our festival will be flourishing just like this young man!"

What? Are you kidding? Isn't the Outstanding Contribution Award supposed to go to an experienced actor with countless films in his resume? It's usually awarded to someone who has influenced an entire generation. Qin Guan is only 26 years old. You gave him this award too soon!

Wang sat back down immediately.

"Why did you sit down again? I thought you wanted to pull me away."

"You misunderstood. I just wanted to fix my dress."

Okay. My agent is a lovely person.

The two of them stood up and hugged each other. Then Wang stepped back calmly to watch Qin Guan hug everyone else. All the Chinese guests were excited about the result.

This was not just a mere acting award, but the biggest honor for an Asian actor. It was one-sided recognition from Tokyo. In the future, Qin Guan could even become one of the judges if he wished. He could become a standing member of the judge committee and an important person amid the Asian film circle.

He was the youngest person to ever win an Outstanding Contribution Award, which was usually the last honor bestowed upon senior actors. That year, the crown was on the head of a rising young actor. The result made everyone rethink the real meaning of the award. Should age be the only criteria? Shouldn't the judges focus on one's artistic contribution?

Wasn't Qin Guan a unique actor in film history? He had broken the restrictions of region, race, language and background and acted in films produced in different countries.

His charm, talent and kindness had helped him overcome racial

discrimination and various other unwritten rules. His films and performances kept getting better and better.

He had made so many breakthroughs and faced so many difficulties successfully. That was what real contribution was like.

He had made the European fashion circle pay attention to an Asian model.

He had introduced Asian people to Hollywood.

He had earned a spot in The Times.

He had made foreigners show interest in China and oriental culture.

He most definitely deserved the award. His power had made the judges ignore his age.

Chapter 892: Feedback From All Sides

Even though he had been born in the 1980s, the actor was as calm, clear-minded and modest as a middle-aged man. He was already above the standards of an award-winning actor. Only an Outstanding Contribution Award could match his talent.

Even if he didn't get the award now, he would eventually win it after a few decades. The organizing committee had decided to add brilliance to his present splendor by awarding him with this international honor.

A hero was nothing but a product of his time. The Japanese always admired heroes, so all the judges had reached the consensus to give Qin Guan the award.

As a result, Qin Guan's speech was now irrelevant.

Fortunately, everyone was too distracted to pay any attention to what he said on the stage. Both the audience and the reporters were considering the consequences of this award in the future, as well as how to profit from this event.

Qin Guan finished his speech by expressing his gratitude and waving the golden award with the symbol of Sakura. Everyone stood up to cheer for him. There was no doubt that he deserved this.

Yamaguchi Tsutomu pressed the remote control to turn off the TV. She could finally relax again after being nervous for so long.

"They still have some good taste left..."

Her sigh faded away along with the image on the screen.

On their way back, Qin Guan and Wang Liying didn't say anything. They were still shocked by the recent events. The fukubukuro from Yamaguchi Tsutomu was still in Wang's hand. Does it even work?

The amazing news had gone viral right away. The next morning, they took the earliest flight back to Beijing to deal with the impending media storm.

As soon as they arrived in Beijing, Wang hurried back to the office. Everything was in order. Wang had just pulled her luggage into the office, when she saw Sister Xue sitting behind her desk calmly.

"Hey, Sister Xue. Did you release the news about Tokyo?"

"Yes."

"Was there any negative feedback?"

Sister Xue was happy to see the worry on Wang's face. The girl was really dedicated to her job. She could trust Wang completely now and retire to the backstage.

She asked Wang to sit down and showed her Qin Guan's secrets, including his fan club, Yamaguchi Tsutomu and their story in New York.

Even after reading the main reports and latest news online, Wang was still shocked by that final secret.

Now she understood why those controversial news hadn't caused them any trouble in Japan. All the Japanese media, both right wing and left wing, had praised the film festival's decision. Qin Guan had the support of an entire nation.

Meanwhile, some Asian countries such as South Korea were complaining about the award and debating over the real meaning of an Outstanding Contribution Award. Should it be based on seniority, contribution, or something else entirely?

The Chinese media remained calm. Qin Guan had won the award after all. No matter what everyone said, China would never return the award.

Those contemptible scoundrels returned without accomplishing

anything. The organizing committee of the Busan Film Festival, which had ended one week before the Tokyo Film Festival, felt frustrated.

Their entertainment industry had made great progress during the past few years. They had even accumulated fans from Europe and America!

The Busan Film Festival was trying its best to expand its influence and compete against the Tokyo Film Festival. In their opinion, the Tokyo Film Festival just copied material from others and presented it as its own. It was the last 9A-level film festival of the year after all.

The Koreans laughed at the deteriorating Japanese entertainment circle. Japan's prime time was gone with the wind. They also looked down upon Japanese taste, arrogance and everything else they could think of. They expected that one day the Busan Film Festival would become the best festival in the Asian film circle.

These news were a huge blow for them. All their effort was gone with the wind.

Chapter 893: A Guest Appearance

The overwhelming news about Qin Guan reached all foreign countries. According to sources in North America and Europe, the media were singing Tokyo's praises. They thought the result was very fair. The youngest winner of the Outstanding Contribution Award inspired everyone to think about the real meaning of cinema itself instead of other irrelevant elements.

Tokyo was extremely respectful.

That was what the foreign media thought. They actually loved Qin Guan. If another unfamiliar young actor had won the award, they would have attacked him mercilessly.

As the reporters kept fighting with each other, Qin Guan was sleeping peacefully at home. He only ever felt safe in that small room. When he got up, he found a pot of porridge in the kitchen.

Thanks to all the awards he had won, Qin Guan's website and microblog had become party venues. His beautiful awards served as decorations. A golden cherry blossom was smiling among silver palm leaves. A large windsurfing board and several shining shells reminded everyone of a beautiful beach. A cute bear was hiding behind a solemn ornamental column... And let's not forget the golden globe and the centaurs!

Suddenly, everyone realized that Qin Guan had won almost every famous film festival award in existence. There were still a few left though, including an Oscar.

As his fans began to look forward to that prestigious award, Qin Guan reached his firm slowly, feeling satiated.

It was time to close the accounts for the end of the year. Before he could finish reading the feedback from the Tokyo Film Festival, his private office phone started ringing. The call had to be about a private issue.

Qin Guan asked Wang Liying to answer the phone for him.

"Hi, this is Lang Kun from CCTV. Is Qin Guan there?"

You again! I'm not joining you this year!

The Spring Festival Gala had not been a good experience for Qin Guan. He hated spending New Year's Eve alone. To him, fame was nothing compared to his family.

"Qin Guan cannot attend the gala this year, director. He spent the whole year working. This is his only chance to see his family. Do you understand?"

Understand? I'm the director of the gala! I spend every Spring Festival working. Maybe I'll resign next year!

Wang's words left Lang speechless. Soon, Wang realized she had misunderstood. Lang had not called Qin Guan about the Spring Festival Gala, but to ask him to make a guest appearance on a friend's project.

It would be a short appearance at the end of a TV show. He was really brave to ask Qin Guan, who was such a popular actor, to be a guest star. Plus, this was a TV show, not a film!

It was no ordinary TV show though. It was the hottest primetime show on CCTV. Numerous famous actors had guest starred in it, most of whom were very experienced. The show's audience ratings had beat every other TV program in 2006, with the exception of CCTV News.

The TV show was called "My Own Swordsman".

The group of obscure actors that starred in it had already become household names. After 80 episodes, the period comedy was finally coming to an end. If they could have a big name guest star in the last episode, the whole series would be completed successfully.

They would even be able to sell the show overseas. It would be a win-win situation.

Thus, Director Shang Jing had asked help from Director Lang, who in turn had called Qin Guan. His salary would be low, as the show was a comedy with a limited budget.

Qin Guan nodded at Wang Liying, who answered in a sweet voice, "We are sorry for not attending the gala, director. I think Qin Guan won't deny such a simple request. When will the last episode be shot? Okay, at the end of this month. No problem. I'll arrange his schedule. No problem."

Chapter 894: The Base In Pinggu

It was like an old fox's trick. When one turned down an invitation, it was hard for them to turn down a second one. Plus, the shooting site was in a suburb of Beijing, the Feilong Film Base in Pinggu County.

Qin Guan could drive there by car and stay at a hotel overnight if necessary. They eventually reached an agreement.

Qin Guan hung up and smiled at Wang. "Please help me fit this into my schedule."

Wang couldn't quite understand his decision. She was confused by his interest in a guest role in such a small production.

She was right. Everyone had initially looked down upon the crew. After the show had been on CCTV for a week though, it had started attracting everyone's attention. The audience took delight in talking about every detail of the show, which had become a very popular topic among young people.

Wang was still confused though, "The show is popular, there's no doubt about that. But it's not worth your attention. It will not benefit you much. You should take the quality of your work into consideration. With all due respect, it's no more than a soap opera."

"You don't understand my feelings."

In his last life, that show had revived light comedy in China. One decade later, people would not produce such popular shows with a limited budget anymore. That show was like a symbol in the river of history that only determined people with high aspirations could swim in.

That was why Qin Guan had accepted the job. He wanted to be a part of it.

They didn't talk about it for long, as a long-lost friend called Qin

Guan right afterwards. It was Director Zhang Jizhong.

He had a new script for Qin Guan, but he was not the director. He was actually the producer. Producers had to worry about audience ratings, money and TV show procedures. Their income was closely related to market information and all related expenses.

Qin Guan was the most popular actor of his time, so he was a safe source of income in everyone's minds.

That was why the director had called his old friend. As expected, Qin Guan told him everything about his upcoming schedule.

"I'd be happy to join your crew, but the filming would last really long. I can't make such a big commitment. Plus, if I was the protagonist, I could be forced to quit acting."

"What? Why?"

"If an actor was warned or forced to quit by the SARFT... You know what I mean..."

"Are you kidding? You won't be forced to quit over one role. You are such a talented guy! Your role in 'Lust Caution' didn't cause you any trouble either. It's none of their business!"

Qin Guan was moved by the director's bravery.

"So what's the script this time?"

"This is my strongest selling point! It's Jin Yong's work 'The Return Of The Condor Heroes'."

"You want me to play Yang Guo?"

"Of course. I want you to compete against Louis Koo."

"Who will be Miss Dragon?"

"Liu Yifei. You have collaborated with her before. She looks exactly like an immortal."

Qin Guan hadn't thought about that. His impression of her was still one of a little girl.

"That's up to you. You are the producer. Please look at my schedule carefully though."

"Of course. Do call me back if you make a decision. There is a long waiting list after you."

"Is Huang Xiaoming in it?"

"Wow! Are you a seer? Yes, all he needs is a chance to shine. He is our fellow after all, isn't he?"

Wang was even more confused by Qin Guan's choice. She was an agent with excellent executive force though. After a short period of preparation, they headed to Pinggu.

Pinggu, which was a county in the suburbs of Beijing, was famous for its specialties and rich history. It produced juicy, sweet peaches that foodies loved. The Great Wall of the Ming Dynasty snaked through the county, serving as the last line of Beijing's defence.

Chapter 895: Qin Tengyun

Amid the winter of Northern China, the valley, with its bare trees bustling in the wind, seemed really boring.

Except for the Tongfu Inn, there was no other presentable construction around. They had chosen the film base halfway up the hill because of their limited budget.

The popularity of the show had created a bare-necessities shooting trend. All the fans of the show had focused on the wrong point.

After more than six months, all the actors living there were now familiar with the base. The day of the final episode was drawing near. Everyone had slowed down on their work as they waited for the last guest star to arrive. It was a big name they had not expected.

The happiest person in the crew was Wang Shasha, who portrayed Mo Xiaobei and was a big fan of Qin Guan's. The unhappiest person was Yao Chen, an actress with a really big mouth.

She had good reason to be unhappy, as her husband, Ling Xiaosu, had originally been supposed to be the guest star. However, her dream had been shattered and the role had gone to Qin Tengyun instead.

The other members of the crew were glad to see Qin Guan, It would be a rich experience to collaborate with him. Plus, in the future, they would also be able to say that they had cooperated with Qin Guan.

Julia Roberts, Chow Yun-Fat and Gong Li had already collaborated with Qin Guan. Now those nameless actors would be added to the list.

Qin Guan was welcomed by everyone. Wang Shasha even pulled

his door open in a dramatic way. Qin Guan joined the group fast.

"Will you work abroad next year, Qin Guan?"

"Shall we take a photo together, Qin Guan?"

"Qin Guan..."

They were certainly a funny crew. Qin Guan felt really nice around them.

Ning Caishen, who was the show's scriptwriter, walked over. That man and Director Shangjing, who was a strict, shameless guy, made for a strange combination. Ning was a leading figure among the first generation of web authors in China. He had been the Director of Operations of Rongshuxia, a big literary website, for three years and witnessed his painstaking care get gradually swallowed up by network operations.

After pondering the matter, he had made the most important decision of his life. He had become a professional scriptwriter. That change had been a huge success for him.

This was the first project that he was shooting based completely on his own ideas. No one could tamper with his work until it could not be recognized anymore.

He had poured all his talent into this project, so he appreciated Shang's effort to bring Qin Guan on board.

When everybody was there, they got ready to witness the end of their effort.

When Qin Guan walked out of the fitting room, everyone fell silent. The crew was staring at him. Qin Guan looked around in confusion and fixed his costume.

Everything seems okay. What are you all looking at?

They were just shocked by his appearance.

It was lucky that Qin Guan was only participating in the last episode of the show, or he would have outshined the protagonist.

Sha Yi, who was the protagonist, let out a long sigh of relief. Meanwhile, Wang Shasha was waving a lightstick at Qin Guan.

The director couldn't tolerate this behavior anymore. "Get ready!" he shouted at everyone. "What are you doing? You can look at him after the scene! Come on! I haven't paid you yet!"

He didn't know that the value of his actors would increase by more than 10 times soon.

Everyone got into position in fear.

"This is the 80th episode! Yan Xiaoliu received a transfer order and Qin Tengyun attacked the Tongfu Inn at night. Three, two, camera!"

The camera started filming.

Crack! The door of the inn was pulled open. A young, handsome swordsman rushed into the hall. He had to be a good martial artist, for his movements looked elegant. The people following him were shut out.

It was a pity that such a handsome man had such a funny accent.

Chapter 896: The Difficulties Of Performing

He was using the rough accent of the Shanxi Province. "Don't chase me, or I'll get angry."

He sounded helpless and annoyed.

Yan Xiaoliu, who was a constable that caught criminals, answered from outside, "Open the door!"

"Who are you?"

Tong Xianyu, who was the heroine, answered the question for him. "It's the town's constable."

Qin Guan opened the door and let Yan in.

The gossip-loving man rushed in to watch the show with everyone else.

"Wow! There is a group of girls at the entrance of the alley. They are holding bouquets and glow sticks..."

Before he could finish his words, Tong Xiangyu pointed at Qin Tenyun, who was still blocking the door with all his might.

Thanks to Tong, Yan realized who the man was. Qin Guan greeted him and introduced himself. He was Yan's successor and the youngest son of a former constable. Wherever he went, there was a group of fans following him.

Back then, a chief constable was equal in power to a director of a district police security bureau. Constables worked for the government and their position was passed down from generation to generation. Such a handsome guy with a high social status would undoubtedly become many girls' idol. The man was annoyed by the fans.

He had reached the Tongfu Inn after three days of riding. The fans had been following him day and night. Now that he had reached his domain, he just wanted to get some sleep.

"Tengyun! Tengyun, I love you!" a woman was shouting loudly outside.

This was a lot like Qin Guan's real-life experiences. Qin Guan wondered if Ning Caishen had adapted the script especially for him.

The scene was a piece of cake for him. When the fans broke in, Qin Guan started running around the hall until the staff of the Tongfu Inn pushed them out. He finished the scene so fast that even Bai Zhantang, who was the protagonist, was impressed by his performance. Actually, Qin Guan was used to this kind of situation.

Qin Guan grabbed Bai's hands and gazed at Bai fiercely, looking really wise and righteous.

"Great! It was a good decision to bring Qin Guan here! He is perfect for the role!"

"I feel sorry for Sha Yi. He looks overwhelmed. He should just adapt in the future. Comedians are not meant to be handsome."

"Yes. They would all have a bright future if they were serious about their performance."

"They can't be worse than they used to be, anyway. Before this show, they were mere extras."

"Yes. Opportunities are rare, but talented people are easy to find in the entertainment circle."

"Qin Guan's participation makes me more confident. The audience ratings of this episode are expected to increase by 1%."

"You are really ambitious!"

"Thank you."

"How long do you want Qin Guan to maintain that expression? Sha Yi left 15 seconds ago!"

"I think the audience would like to see his face a little longer."

Okay, you are the director. It's up to you.

Ning Caishen kicked Shang on the butt and told him, "Okay! Cut! Get ready for the next scene! Yao Chen, you two will be partners in the next scene!"

"No problem!" Qin Guan had already gotten used to the director's tricks and the extended shooting schedule.

Suddenly, he was handed a folding fan. That would be his only prop during the scene.

"Thank you for your understanding, Qin Guan. You know our budget is limited..."

Okay, okay. It's all up to you.

He walked over again, waving his fan in the winter. Guo Furong's shouts had moved him to tears.

"Do you understand my feelings?"

Guo grimaced. "No." The director filmed a meticulously close, high-definition shot of Qin Guan's face. He had a strict expression on his face as he delivered the most self-absorbed words in the world. His appearance overshadowed his strange feelings.

Chapter 897: The End

"Most people consider me a handsome guy."

"I'm not among those people."

"That's it! In your eyes, I'm just an ordinary person made of flesh and blood. I wanted to express my appreciation to you, Guo. I hope you stay like this forever. Never be kind to me or fall in love with me, or I'll be disappointed in you."

What a shameless guy! The words coming out of Qin Guan's mouth did not sound strange though. He seemed to be enjoying telling the truth.

The man was like an embroidered pillow stuffed with straw. He couldn't stand pain. He hit his forehead against a pillar while pretending to be all majestic and fearless.

Bang! Everyone thought he was a really dedicated actor. Qin Guan launched a dart, displaying the ultimate skill of the Qin family.

His long hair was flying in the air beautifully. Thanks to his performance, the serious atmosphere suddenly became funny. Some people burst into laughter.

Director Shang pointed to the camera and explained to the other actors, "See? A good actor should not just be able to express delicate feelings. Isn't he a handsome man?"

Everyone nodded.

"Why are you laughing at him then? He's just a handsome man delivering some ordinary lines. Why did you burst into laughter? It was because of his power of interpretation. He knows how to express himself comically."

"He is just like Xu Zheng. Did you watch his film 'Crazy Stone'? His role had no dramatic lines, but he combined other characters,

scenes and storylines to create a strong comic effect. I think all comedians should learn from him."

"To be frank, if we want to attract an audience, we should be focusing on the quality of our work. It's not that easy to create a good comedy."

Thank you, director. That was a compliment, right?

After more than six months, the end of the show was finally drawing near. The show was a common achievement they had overcome a lot of difficulties for. The director was proud of every actor.

Everyone entered the set passionately and got ready for the final scene. They were in the hall of the Tongfu Inn. In case of trouble, everyone would say "Have a good meal!" to fool the customers.

That day, the customers were played by crew members who had some time off. They all assumed their original positions, except for one person who was actually a newcomer.

It was Qin Tengyun, who had replaced Yan Xiaoliu. He sat down in the middle of the table, while all the other members of the Tongfu Inn sat down around him. It was time for supper, a relaxing, celebratory time.

Qin Guan poured water into a bowl from a liquor jar. His conversation with Sha Ye would be a tough test.

Qin Guan was playing a man who had lost his confidence in his abilities because of a mistake he had made 10 years ago. He had been suffering for an entire decade.

As he stared at Sha Yi, Qin Guan seemed to recall that memory. He was handsome, but he was completely lost in his own world.

All he could do was express his feelings about his wrong choice.

"It was you who harmed me!"

"I'm only a thief. How could I possibly harm a constable?"

"When I was a child, my father told me that we should catch thieves at any price. One day, I tried to shoot your left eye, but you caught my dart! A thief was protecting a hostage, while I, a constable, was about to hurt a hostage in my effort to catch a thief!"

The man had lost his confidence ever since. Without the correct guidance of his family, he had lost his way completely. Thus, the boy had been chasing Bai Zhantang, the thief who had affected him so deeply, for 10 years in order to put an end to that confusing incident.

Unfortunately, he had underestimated Bai Zhantang. The same scene took place again in that hall after 10 years. This time, Qin Guan caught Tong Xiangyu by the neck and seized the stone Bai had thrown at her left eye.

He was finally satisfied with himself. He now knew that this was a normal human reaction that was neither right nor wrong.

Chapter 898: Straying From The Point

Before the ending, the director didn't forget to show some positive energy and tell the audience that the kind people were much more than the evil people in the world.

All the main actors stood together in front of the camera with big grins, while the director gestured at them.

Thus ended "My Own Swordsman", a milestone of a TV show and a symbol of an entire era. The 80-episode TV show would be broadcast in all TV stations for a full three years.

Qin Guan put a satisfactory full stop to the show. Before leaving, everyone came together to have a meal. The only present Qin Guan received was a box of fruit and some vegetable juice, which had been the favorite drink of the crew during the tropical summer. It was a little weird to have it during the winter though.

The shameless director didn't make any explanations. The feedback after the episode aired would be the best compensation for Qin Guan.

Everyone was excited about the last episode. People had originally thought that Jiang Wen was an expert when it came to confidential work. "Curse Of The Golden Flower" hadn't been revealed to the Chinese audience yet after all.

However, it had been selected by the Venice Film Festival and people had a general idea about the main cast, basic context and storyline.

TV shows were more random though. They were usually shot as they were being broadcast, so people didn't know what would happen in the next episodes in advance.

The last episode was a shocking surprise for everyone.

"Qin Guan is guest starring in 'My Own Swordsman'!"

"He just won the Outstanding Contribution Award in Tokyo!"

"If the director went so far as to hire him, then he must be a powerful man!"

"This is normal. It's a popular CCTV show after all. Qin Guan has always been a patriot. He has never turned down a proposal from a CCTV director."

"It's weird though. This is a good show, but Qin Guan is like a king among peasants, if you know what I mean..."

"Are you implying that international award-winning actors should be arrogant? Good actors should remain humble and take the quality of their work into consideration. It would not be wise of him to turn down a limited-budget TV show just because he won a few awards."

"Exactly. Plus, Qin Guan has declared that he only judges a film by its script, not its budget. Arrogant award-winning actors and actresses can stay home."

"To be honest, they just pretend to be somebody. After their popularity fades, the audience forgets about them completely."

"Exactly!"

The audience was simple-minded. As long as an actor's role pleased them, they would love them, regardless of if they portrayed a superhero or a beggar. They never took the budget or the director of a show into consideration.

The Chinese audience was very tolerant when it came to good scripts and good roles.

Everyone fell in love with Qin Tengyun. The audience was reluctant to part with the TV show that had accompanied them for several months.

They were already looking forward to the sequel, with the hope that Qin Tengyun would appear again in the future.

Reality was different though. Ning Caishen had not thought about what he would do next. Inspiration had not hit him yet. Plus, Qin Guan couldn't change his fixed schedule for such a long time. For him, it would be best for that project to end there.

Chapter 899: Meeting The Father-In-Law

All things had flaws. Nothing was perfect in the world. After work, Qin Guan decided to spend all his spare time with his family.

When his fans saw pictures of the sea uploaded on his blog, they realized that Qin Guan had returned to his hometown. He had temporarily gotten time off work to enjoy the Spring Festival with his parents. He was a very obedient son.

Meanwhile, his parents and Cong Nianwei's parents had reached the agreement that their children would get married before paying more attention to their careers. They were almost 30 years old after all.

Cong Nianwei's father felt really nervous about this due to Qin Guan's rising status. He loved his daughter very much, so he was very concerned.

He knew his daughter well. Every time he called her, she was either studying or working. She had mentioned Qin Guan many times, but she hadn't sounded worried. It seemed that Qin Guan's fame had not affected their relationship.

As a man, he had no idea what the origin of her confidence was, To him, Qin Guan was still the bad boy who had stolen his daughter away.

While Cong Nianwei's father was busy thinking of 108 ways to torture Qin Guan, the bastard suddenly invited him to a private meeting.

Why would a rat invite over a cat? Cong Nianwei's father opened the window to make sure that the sun had not risen from the East that day.

Did he commit some unforgivable crime that he needs to be forgiven for?

He began to look around the living room for a handy weapon. In

the end, he chose a wrench from his tool box. The hammer was too heavy, and the bolt driver was too dangerous, but the wrench was the perfect tool to flatten someone's nose.

Cong Nianwei's father left in a hurry with a fierce smile on his face. Cong Nianwei's mother nudged Cong Nianwei, who was carefully peeling an apple on the couch.

"What happened to your father? He had a strange smile on his face."

Cong Nianwei looked indifferent. She knew her father really well.

"Just check the caller ID. He answered the phone before he started acting strange. You don't need to feel embarrassed. I won't laugh at you."

Her mother pressed the buttons on the phone until she saw a familiar number.

"Huh? The call was from Qin Guan's home."

While Cong Nianwei and Qin Guan had been in Beijing, their parents had maintained a close relationship, so Cong Nianwei's mother was familiar with their phone number.

"That's really strange. If they had something to tell us, Qin Guan would have called you or me. Your father is such a troublemaker..."

Cong Nianwei finished peeling the apple and took a bite.

"Qin Guan must have some ideas he wants to share with dad."

"What ideas?"

"God knows!" Cong Nianwei shrugged. She was used to his unpredictable behavior.

"Do you think they are planning to rob a bank or something? I wouldn't put it past them..."

They exchanged a meaningful look with each other.

The best place for a meeting in the winter was a tea house. There were some unique tea houses along the beach, which had been reconstructed from old buildings. There were open halls and lounges with small booths inside. Qin Guan was waiting in a small tea house.

He was looking at the rising mist amid the rare winter sunshine as he waited nervously for the other man to arrive.

It had been a long time since he had been nervous about anything. One only felt nervous about matters they really cared about. Qin Guan could predict how the conversation with his father-in-law would go. If he could move the man, then his plan would succeed.

Qin Guan had dressed formally to impress Cong Nianwei's father, hoping that they could possibly form a male alliance.

When Cong Nianwei's father entered the tea house in a threatening manner, he saw a sparkling man waiting there. Maybe it was his bad eyesight, or maybe the sunshine was too bright in that place.

Although he still hated Qin Guan, he had to admit that he looked great.

Chapter 900: Secrets Of Men

It must have been his good looks that had seduced his daughter. Cong Nianwei's father calmed down again. He had prepared to play the role of the mighty father. If the bastard said anything unfavorable about his daughter, he would throw that wrench at his face.

It would be better for other girls if he disfigured him.

As soon as Cong Nianwei's father took a seat, Qin Guan poured a cup of tea for him politely. Judging from the fragrance in the air, it had to be black tea, which was his favorite in the winter.

Okay, Qin Guan was definitely smart.

Although he enjoyed being served by him, Cong Nianwei's father still wanted to talk about business. He took a sip of tea and got straight to the point.

"So why did you ask me to come here?"

Qin Guan rubbed his hands and moved closer to Cong Nianwei's father. It was a psychological trick that was meant to narrow the gap between two people.

Cong Nianwei's father bent forward as well.

"It will be 2007 next year, right?"

"Yes."

"I'll be 27 years old, which is very close to 30."

"Yes."

"Cong Nianwei is the same age as me."

"Yes."

"She should get married."

"Yes... No, she doesn't have to rush. She can take it easy."

"Of course, it's not like she has to worry about marriage. Listen to me, uncle. We have a very good relationship. Like me or not, you have to admit this."

Cong Nianwei's father nodded.

"Plus, our families also get along well. We have known each other for years. We are a good match, aren't we?"

Cong Nianwei's father nodded again.

"Just imagine, if we got married next year... Don't look at me like that. I'm just talking hypothetically. If we got married next year, we would have to register at the Civil Affairs Bureau, hold a banquet both in Y City and in America..."

"If Cong Nianwei got pregnant as soon as we got married... Stop! Don't hit me!"

Qin Guan changed the topic immediately. "What would it be like to have a baby call you grandfather?"

A cute baby suddenly popped into the man's mind. The baby was waving at him and calling him grandpa. He almost burst into laughter.

"Both of us would be really busy working, so the grandparents would have to take care of the baby. You will retire soon, and so will my parents. We have prepared two apartments for you in Beijing. They are right across from each other."

"You can raise the baby together."

He is right. That's something worth looking forward to. Oh, no!

Cong Nianwei's father came back to reality. There was a serious expression on his face. "You haven't even gotten married yet. Why are you talking about a baby? You are getting ahead of yourself."

"Exactly!" Qin Guan looked really sad. "I'm already 27 years old. Even if Cong Nianwei got pregnant right away, you'd have a grandson in one year at best."

"You are already over 50 years old, despite the fact that you look like 40. It would take 20 years for your grandson to grow up. Wouldn't you want to see him go to college and get a girlfriend?"

"Of course!" The man immediately corrected himself, "Why not a granddaughter though? We would prefer a girl! You should never underestimate women!"

"My bad! Wouldn't you want to meet your grandson-in-law?"

No. My daughter has been stolen away by a bastard. If my lovely granddaughter was stolen as well...

Cong Nianwei's father suddenly felt as though he had nothing left to live for.

"Besides, the optimum reproductive age for women is between 25 and 30 years old. If we waited too long, she would be too old and the whole process would be more dangerous for her. Plus, younger mothers recover faster."

You are really reasonable, young man.

This was the third time Cong Nianwei's father was nodding. He soon realized there was a reason to argue about though.

"Why don't you propose to her as soon as possible then? Are you planning on ditching her?"

"Of course not!" Qin Guan said nervously. "That's why I invited you here. Every time we've talked about this, she's asked me to wait until my award display was full. Do you know how many shelves that display has? Four! I'm a hard-working guy, but it would still take me two years to fill that display."

"Your daughter is really serious about these things! That's why I've come to you for help!"

Cong Nianwei's father put the wrench away and sat up proudly.

"You should have gone to her mother. She likes you a lot and she is an easy-going woman."

"But I thought Cong Nianwei was closer to you..."

What a sweet-talker!

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